

## Starstruck bonds: Unveiling celebrity endorsement's spell on brand love, with friendship's embrace as the magic touch

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### Abstract

*This study aims to explore the influence of celebrity credibility in the context of celebrity endorsement on the formation of brand love and the role of friendship in moderating this relationship. Quantitative research methods were used, involving online surveys and structured interviews with consumers who have experience with brands that involve celebrity endorsements. Purposive sampling with a final 95 respondents participating in this research. PROCESS V3.5 for SPSS was chosen to analyze and test the hypothesis. The results of the analysis show that celebrity credibility has a significant influence on increasing brand love, and social influence plays an important role in strengthening the relationship between celebrity credibility and brand love. The practical implications of this study are the importance of selecting credible celebrities and using social interactions in marketing strategies to strengthen consumers' emotional ties to brands.*

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### Keywords:

*brand love; celebrity credibility; friendship; social influence; moderation.*

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## **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengaruh kredibilitas selebriti dalam konteks dukungan selebriti terhadap pembentukan kecintaan terhadap merek dan peran persahabatan dalam memoderasi hubungan ini. Metode penelitian kuantitatif digunakan, yang melibatkan survei daring dan wawancara terstruktur dengan konsumen yang memiliki pengalaman dengan merek yang melibatkan dukungan selebriti. Pengambilan sampel secara purposive dengan 95 responden akhir yang berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. PROSES V3.5 untuk SPSS dipilih untuk menganalisis dan menguji hipotesis. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa kredibilitas selebriti memiliki pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap peningkatan kecintaan terhadap merek, dan pengaruh sosial memainkan peran penting dalam memperkuat hubungan antara kredibilitas selebriti dan kecintaan terhadap merek. Implikasi praktis dari penelitian ini adalah pentingnya memilih selebriti yang kredibel dan menggunakan interaksi sosial dalam strategi pemasaran untuk memperkuat ikatan emosional konsumen terhadap merek.

**Kata kunci:** Dukungan Sosial, Inovasi, Keberlanjutan Bisnis

## **Introduction**

Research on customer relationships related to brand love is an interesting topic and continues to be explored today (Albert & Merunka, 2013). Research on the influence of celebrity credibility and endorsement on the formation of brand love is becoming increasingly relevant in the context of modern marketing (Gonçalves, 2019). As competition in the market becomes increasingly fierce, companies are competing to attract consumers' attention through various marketing strategies, one of which is using celebrities as brand ambassadors. Previous studies have shown that celebrity endorsements can increase consumer trust (Febrian & Fadly, 2021; Firman et al., 2021) in a brand and create a strong emotional bond between consumers and the brand (Qiu et al., 2021). In addition, research by Dwivedi and Johnson (2013) revealed that celebrities as endorsements can bridge the formation of brand equity by increasing trust and commitment to the brand. This shows that celebrity credibility plays an important role in building a positive brand image in the minds of consumers.

In this context, brand love is defined as consumers' deep positive feelings towards a brand, which can influence their purchasing behavior. Brand love includes emotional attraction, long-term involvement, and commitment to the brand (Batra et al., 2012). Research shows that a strong relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand love can increase consumer loyalty (Mulyawati et al., 2020; Trivedi & Sama, 2021; Zhang et al., 2020), where consumers feel more connected to the brand represented by the celebrity they admire (Dwivedi et al., 2016). Therefore, understanding how celebrity credibility influences brand love is important for marketers in designing effective campaigns.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of friendship in the context of social media also contributes to the formation of brand love (Palusuk et al., 2019; Vernuccio et al., 2015). Consumers often share their experiences with brands through social media platforms, creating a community around the brand (Palusuk et al., 2019). Furthermore, the platform on social media can be due to the relationship between customers and employees and customers and customers (Li et al., 2024). These friendships can strengthen consumers' emotional connection with the brand, especially when celebrities interact directly with their fans. These interactions not only increase brand visibility but also create a sense of ownership and attachment among consumers.

Building on Carroll and Ahuvia's concept of brand love, this research explores how the interplay between celebrity endorsements and feelings of friendship can cultivate consumer

affection for a brand. By leveraging celebrities, brands aim to foster a deeper emotional connection with consumers, aligning with Fournier's (1998) relationship marketing theory, which emphasizes the importance of building enduring relationships. Cultivating feelings of friendship between consumers and brands can further strengthen this bond, increasing the likelihood of developing brand love.

Gumparthi and Patra's (2020) research in their systematic literature review shows that brand love is built from the existence of a customer-brand relationship and also the existence of social identity development. This relationship is by Batra et al. (2012), who stated that self-identity builds brand love. Furthermore, this study is also based on the theory of social identity, which explains the similarity or self-congruence. A person seeing the self-image carried by a celebrity will increase the perception of the celebrity's credibility (Hussain, 2021). Consumers who feel in tune with celebrities have a strong perception of identity that will lead to a more positive brand attitude (Pokrywczynski & Brinker, 2012). Moreover identity theory shows that friendship is a part of social life that will influence interactions towards something because of their closeness (Zhang et al., 2022), and friendship will influence a person's behavior and preferences regarding whether they like or dislike something (Levicheva , & Dimans, 2023), which in this case leads to brand love.

This study will identify key factors influencing the relationship between celebrity endorsement, brand love, and friendship. The results are expected to provide new insights for marketers in designing more effective marketing strategies. It also contributes to the science by closing the gap by providing evidence for a model that links the role of ambassador credibility with friendship in forming brand love, which has never been studied before, and there is no empirical evidence for this relationship.

Overall, the relationship between celebrity credibility, brand love, and friendship is a promising research area in marketing. By understanding these dynamics, companies can better build emotional connections with consumers and create long-term loyalty to their brands. This research will provide academic contributions and practical applications for the marketing industry in facing the challenges of the ever-evolving market.

## **Theoretical framework and hypotheses**

### **Theoretical background**

#### **Social Identity Theory**

Celebrity credibility refers to the extent to which consumers perceive a celebrity as trustworthy and relevant. Research shows that celebrities with high credibility can build stronger emotional connections with brands, which in turn increases brand love. According to Franzak et al. (2014), celebrity endorsement plays an important role in creating emotional value in brands, and the positive relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand love has been shown to be significant in various studies.

Social Identity Theory also supports this hypothesis, where consumers tend to follow the behavior of others they consider role models. When a credible celebrity endorses a brand, consumers feel more confident engaging with the brand. Research by Frimpong et al. (2019) shows that celebrity endorsements influence purchasing decisions and create a strong emotional bond between consumers and brands. This suggests that celebrity credibility can serve as a bridge to build brand love through positive social influence.

Furthermore, research by Junaid et al. (2019) confirmed that positive experiences with brands, often triggered by celebrity endorsements, contribute to the formation of brand love. They found that brand love serves as a link between brand experience and consumer

engagement, strengthening the argument that celebrity credibility has a significant impact on brand love. In this context, celebrity credibility not only influences brand perception but also creates positive experiences that drive emotional attachment.

### **Celebrity Credibility and Brand Love**

Research by Hwang and Kandampully (2012) shows that a strong emotional connection between consumers and a brand can increase positive evaluations of the brand. Brand love is considered a reflection of emotional attachment and passion for a brand that develops over time. Thus, celebrity endorsements with high credibility can strengthen consumers' feelings of love for the brand (Hussain, 2021).

In the realm of consumer behavior, celebrities often serve as powerful symbols that individuals use to construct their identities. Social Identity Theory posits that individuals derive a portion of their self-concept from the groups they belong to or aspire to belong to. Therefore, when a consumer admires a celebrity, they may seek to emulate the traits and characteristics associated with that celebrity, thereby incorporating them into their self-concept (Wong & Hung, 2023).

Moreover, Fournier (1998) stated that Relationship Theory emphasizes the development of relationships between consumers and brands. When a celebrity endorses a brand, it essentially becomes a relational partner in the consumer's mind. This endorsement can transfer credibility from the celebrity to the brand, influencing consumer perceptions and attitudes toward the brand (Pokrywczynski & Brinker, 2012).

By combining these two theories, we can argue that the credibility of a celebrity endorser can significantly impact consumers' perceptions of a brand, ultimately fostering brand love. Consumers may develop a stronger emotional connection to the brand due to their positive associations with the celebrity endorser, leading to increased brand loyalty and advocacy. Therefore, based on the intertwining principles of Social Identity Theory and Relationship Theory, it is reasonable to hypothesize that celebrity credibility plays a pivotal role in shaping brand love among consumers, as the endorsement by a credible celebrity can positively influence consumer perceptions, attitudes, and emotional attachments to the brand.

**H1:** Increasing celebrity credibility will increase brand love

### **Friendship and Brand Love**

The hypothesis that friendship influences brand love can be built by understanding social influence in marketing, especially through social identity theory. Friendship, either directly or through social media, can strengthen consumers' emotional connections with brands. When individuals see their friends liking or recommending a brand, they tend to follow suit. According to Cialdini (2009), social influence can shape a person's attitudes and behavior, including in the context of purchasing and brand preferences. This suggests that social interaction can be an important factor in forming brand love.

Research by Batra et al. (2012) supports this argument by showing that brand love is the result of a strong emotional attachment between consumers and a brand. They argue that positive experiences shared by friends can enhance emotional evaluations of the brand. When consumers feel connected to their friends who love a brand, this feeling can create a deeper bond and encourage them to develop brand love. This is in line with research by Yasin and Shamim (2013), who found that positive word of mouth from friends can strengthen brand love because consumers feel more confident in recommendations from those closest to them.

Furthermore, research by Swimberghe et al. (2014) shows that the relationship between consumers and brands can be strengthened through positive social interactions. When individuals

share positive experiences about a brand on social media or in everyday interactions, this not only increases brand awareness but also creates a sense of ownership among consumers. Thus, friendship serves as a bridge to build brand love, where consumers feel more emotionally attached to brands recommended by their friends.

Social Identity Theory is also relevant in this context. Consumers tend to feel more comfortable liking and purchase a product when they see others, especially their friends, doing the same. Research by Akiko (2017) shows that the influence of friends in forming brand love is very significant because consumers who feel connected to a certain community are more likely to develop a love for the same brand. This shows that friendship not only influences purchasing decisions but also forms a deeper emotional attachment to the brand.

Considering the above arguments, various previous theories and studies can support the hypothesis that friendship influences brand love. This study has the potential to provide new insights into how social interactions can strengthen emotional relationships between consumers and brands

## **H2: Friendship influences brand love**

### **The interaction between brand love and friendship**

Friendship strengthens the influence of celebrity credibility on brand love. This can be built through an understanding of social identity theory and support from previous research. Friendship, both in the real world and on social media platforms, can strengthen celebrity credibility's positive impact on brand love. When consumers see their friends liking or recommending products endorsed by celebrities, this can increase their trust and emotional attachment to the brand.

Social identity Theory explains that individuals tend to follow the behavior of others they consider as role models. According to Cialdini (2009), this social influence is very strong in the marketing context, where recommendations from friends can strengthen positive attitudes towards a brand. When a credible celebrity endorses a product, and the consumer's friends also show support for the product, consumers are more likely to develop brand love. Research by Martins Gonçalves (2020) shows that celebrity endorsement has a significant impact on brand trust and brand love, and when recommendations from friends support the endorsement, the effect is even stronger.

Furthermore, research by Frimpong et al. (2019) shows that celebrity endorsement not only influences purchasing decisions but also creates a strong emotional bond between consumers and brands. They found that when friends share positive experiences about a brand endorsed by a celebrity, this can strengthen brand love. Thus, friendship serves as a bridge that strengthens the relationship between celebrity credibility and brand love, where recommendations from friends can increase trust in celebrities and brands.

In the context of social media, interactions between consumers and celebrities can also increase the influence of celebrity credibility. Research by Aw & Labrecque (2020) shows that direct engagement between celebrities and fans on social media creates greater emotional closeness. When friends share positive content or experiences related to a particular celebrity and brand, this can create a cumulative effect that strengthens brand love. In other words, friendship not only functions as a channel of information but also as an emotional amplifier for consumers to feel love for the brand.

Considering the above arguments, the hypothesis that friendship strengthens the influence of celebrity credibility on brand love can be supported by various previous theories and studies. This study has the potential to provide new insights into how social interaction can

enhance the impact of celebrity endorsements in building emotional relationships with brands.

**H3:** Appropriate friends strengthen the influence of celebrity credibility on brand love.

## **Methods**

### **Procedure and sample**

The research methodology for this study involves a quantitative approach with the main objective of analyzing the influence of celebrity credibility and endorsement on the formation of brand love, as well as the role of friendship in strengthening the relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand love.

The population of this study was limited to the researcher's social media group (Instagram), which was around 180 people. The purposive sampling technique was used, with the condition that they were over 18 years old because they were considered adults and could make purchasing decisions. From this criterion, 167 people were obtained. Then the second consideration is that this study specializes in cosmetic products with the brands Scarlet Whitening and Something. Respondents can choose from both brands. Based on this criterion, it was filtered to 139 people who met. Then, filtered again with the criteria of making purchases at least twice in the last month, 103 people were obtained. After being selected, the answers met 95 respondents. Female respondents were 90% of all respondents, considering that cosmetic products today, although they have penetrated men, are still dominated by women.

### **Measures**

After instrument development, the researcher will distribute an online survey to respondents who match the research sample, while also conducting structured interviews with a number of respondents to explore certain relevant aspects. The collected data will be analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to describe the characteristics of the sample, as well as regression analysis to test the relationship between celebrity credibility, endorsement, friendship, and brand love.

Brand love is measured from eight statement items, which are Albert's development taken from Becheur et al.'s research (2017). The dimensions used are selected from three dimensions: dream, intimacy, and uniqueness. In the celebrity credibility variable, five items reflect the honorable dimension obtained from Singh and Banerjee's (2018) research. Then, friendship is measured through three items regarding social influence from friends, as obtained from Thin et al.'s (2012) research. All variables in this study, when collecting data in the questionnaire, used a Semantic scale, with a range from 1 to 5.

### **Data analysis procedures**

The results of the data analysis will be evaluated to interpret the influence of independent variables (celebrity credibility and endorsement) and intervening variables (friendship) on the dependent variable (brand love). Discussion and interpretation of the research findings will be conducted to explore the practical implications of this study for marketing strategies and business practices.

SPSS and MACROPROCESS for SPSS tools were chosen to perform moderation analysis techniques and other tests. Testing the validity of factor analysis through SPSS 26 with dimension reduction. Reliability with Cronbach Alpha, which was run with SPSS 26. Descriptive statistics and correlations were assisted with SPSS 26. At the same time, hypothesis testing includes moderation with PROCESS v3.5 model No. 1.

## Results and discussion

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients for the study's key variables: Celebrity Credibility, Friendship, and Brand Love. The mean score for Celebrity Credibility is 4.01 (out of a 5-point scale), derived from responses to five items, suggesting a relatively favorable perception of celebrity credibility. The mean score for Friendship is 3.85 (out of a 5-point scale), based on six items, indicating a positive inclination among respondents to view their relationship with the brand as akin to a friendship. The mean score for Brand Love is 3.73 (out of a 5-point scale), calculated from eight items, suggesting a moderate degree of affection and attachment towards the brand.

**Table 1.**

*Mean and Correlation*

Variable	Mean	Celebrity Credibility	Friendship
Celebrity Credibility	4,01	1	
Friendship	3,85	0,753**	1
Brand Love	3,73	0,233**	0,465**

\*p<0,05; \*\*p<0,01

Source: Author, Data processing 2024

Correlation analysis revealed a strong, positive correlation between Celebrity Credibility and Friendship ( $r = 0.753$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), implying that consumers who perceive celebrities as credible are also more likely to develop a sense of friendship with the brand. A weak, positive correlation is observed between Celebrity Credibility and Brand Love ( $r = 0.233$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). While statistically significant, the magnitude of the correlation suggests that celebrity credibility alone may not be a strong predictor of brand love. A moderate, positive correlation is evident between Friendship and Brand Love ( $r = 0.465$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that consumers who perceive a brand as a friend are more likely to exhibit brand love.

The results suggest that celebrity credibility plays a role in fostering both a sense of friendship with the brand and, to a lesser extent, brand love. However, the stronger correlation between friendship and brand love underscores the importance of cultivating a genuine connection with consumers. While celebrity endorsements can be a valuable tool, brands should focus on building meaningful relationships with their customers to engender brand love. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, including the correlational nature of the data and the potential influence of the specific brands and celebrities involved. Future research could explore these relationships in different contexts and employ methodologies that allow for causal inferences.

Table 2 shows an R-squared ( $R^2$ ) value of 0.533. This indicates that the model, which includes Celebrity Credibility, Friendship, and interaction, explains 53.3% of the variance in Brand Love. The remaining 46.7% of the variance is attributed to other factors not included in this model. The F-statistic is 34.647 with a p-value of 0.000. This indicates that the model is statistically significant, meaning it's unlikely that the relationships observed are due to chance. In simpler terms, the model demonstrates a good fit and is useful for predicting Brand Love based on Celebrity Credibility and Friendship.

**Table 2.**  
*Hypotheses testing outcome variable brand love*

Model	Coeff	se	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3,527	0,070	3,388	3,665
Celebrity Credibility	1,293	0,131	1,032	1,554
Friendship	-0,439	0,080	-0,600	-0,279
Celebrity Credibilit X Friendship	0,308	0,053	0,203	0,412

Source; Data processing 2024

The analysis revealed a positive and significant effect of celebrity credibility on brand love (coeff = 1.293,  $p < 0.000$ ), supporting the hypothesis that higher celebrity credibility leads to increased brand love. However, the effect of friendship on brand love is negative and significant (coeff = -0.439,  $p < 0.000$ ). Although the hypothesis put forward has no direction, this unexpected result suggests a complex interplay between friendship and celebrity credibility, which is further explored through the interaction effect.

The significant interaction term (coeff = 0.308,  $p < 0.000$ ) confirms that friendship moderates the relationship between celebrity credibility and brand love. Specifically, the positive interaction coefficient indicates that the effect of celebrity credibility on brand love is stronger when friendship is high. This suggests that building strong relationships with consumers can amplify the positive impact of celebrity endorsements on brand love. In simpler terms, celebrity endorsements are more effective when consumers feel a sense of connection or friendship with the brand.

The findings highlight the importance of both celebrity credibility and consumer relationships in driving brand love. While celebrity credibility can directly enhance brand love, its effect is amplified when consumers feel a sense of friendship with the brand. This underscores the value of fostering genuine connections with consumers to maximize the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements. Further research could explore the underlying mechanisms of this interaction and investigate other factors that may influence brand love.

The study's results also revealed that social influence, such as friendship, plays an important role in moderating the relationship between celebrity credibility and increased brand love. It was found that social interaction, especially in the context of friendship on social media, can strengthen the emotional bond between consumers and brands endorsed by celebrities. When consumers feel involved in a community that enriches their experience with the brand, this can increase the intensity of positive feelings towards the brand, which is reflected in increased brand love.

The results of this study provide strong evidence that celebrity credibility factors play a role in forming brand love, as well as social influence with friendship, which can strengthen this relationship. These findings provide valuable insights for marketing practitioners in designing more effective campaign strategies by considering not only the selection of credible celebrities but also how to utilize social interactions and friendships in the digital era to strengthen consumers' emotional ties to brands.

Thus, this study highlights the importance of considering the aspects of celebrity credibility and social influence in the context of brand love formation. Marketing strategies that combine these two factors well can significantly increase consumer loyalty and strengthen

brand position in an increasingly competitive market. The practical implications of these findings provide a strong foundation for companies to develop more effective and competitive marketing campaigns in the digital era filled with information and social interactions.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this study unequivocally suggest that celebrity credibility has a profound impact on enhancing brand love. This phenomenon can be attributed to the social identity theory, which posits that individuals derive a sense of belonging and self-concept from the groups they associate with (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When a consumer admires a celebrity, they tend to incorporate the celebrity's traits and characteristics into their own self-concept, thereby fostering a sense of connection with the brand endorsed by the celebrity.

Furthermore, Fournier's (1998) relationship theory provides valuable insights into the development of relationships between consumers and brands. The endorsement of a brand by a credible celebrity can lead to the transfer of credibility from the celebrity to the brand, ultimately influencing consumer perceptions and attitudes towards the brand. This is consistent with the findings of Özer et al. (2022), who demonstrated that celebrity endorsements can increase brand recognition and brand loyalty.

The results of this study are also in line with the work of Tian et al. (2022), who argued the mechanism by which celebrity traits shape brand meanings, ultimately affecting consumer beliefs and attitudes. This transfer of meaning can lead to a deeper emotional connection between the consumer and the brand, culminating in increased brand love. This is in line with Zhou et al.'s research. (2020) revealed that endorsements portrayed by sports stars' personal brands are positively related to brand love. In addition, research in other sectors, such as tourism (Zhang et al., 2020) and restaurants (Trivedi & Sama, 2021), shows the same mechanism of how brand ambassadors or celebrity endorsements affect brand love.

In the context of brand love, our findings support the notion that celebrity credibility plays a critical role in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors toward a brand. This is particularly important for brands seeking to establish a strong emotional connection with their target audience. By partnering with a credible celebrity endorser, brands can leverage the celebrity's reputation and social influence to build trust, loyalty, and ultimately, brand love.

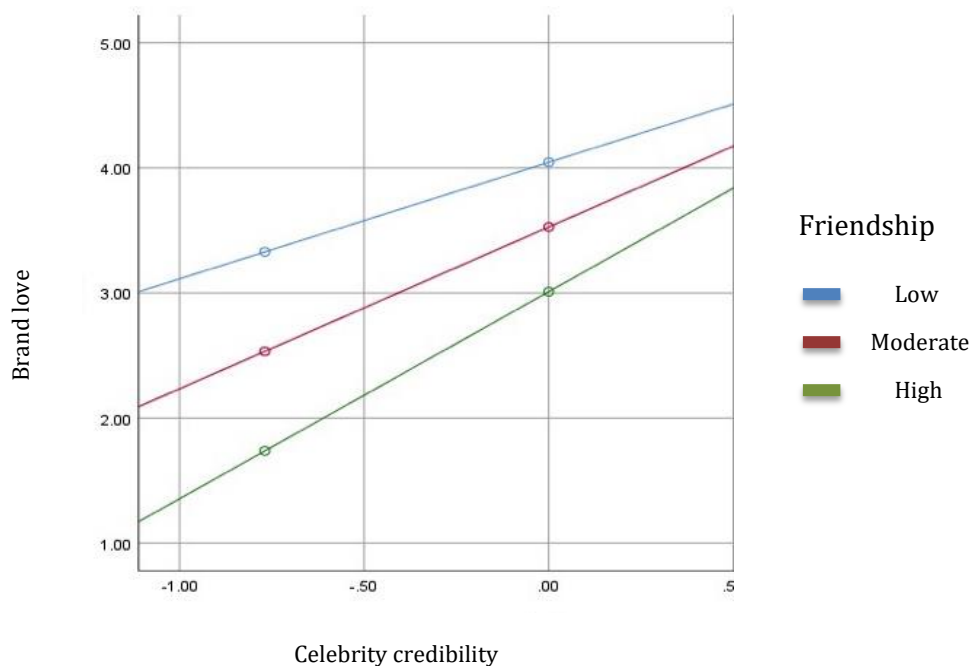
The relationship between friendship and brand love is a compelling area of research that highlights how social connections can significantly enhance consumer attachment to brands. Building on the Social Identity Theory, which posits that individuals derive part of their identity from the groups to which they belong, we can understand how friendships formed in social contexts influence brand perceptions. When consumers perceive a brand as part of their social identity—often through shared experiences and interactions with friends—they are likelier to develop a sense of loyalty and affection towards that brand (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Moreover, the Relationship Theory further elucidates this phenomenon by suggesting that the emotional bonds formed through friendships can extend to brand relationships. Brands that successfully cultivate a community-like atmosphere, where consumers feel connected to the brand and each other, can foster deeper emotional ties. This aligns with findings from Wallace et al. (2022), which indicate that online brand engagement and consumer identification are critical antecedents of brand love, ultimately influencing consumers' willingness to co-create value and pay premium prices for brands they love.

Research has shown that social media friendships significantly impact young consumers' brand awareness, image, trust, and purchase intentions (Bilgin, 2020). This suggests that as friendships develop within these platforms, brands are perceived more positively, leading to increased brand love. Furthermore, "superficial" friendships—where interactions may not lead

to genuine affection—highlight the importance of authentic engagement in building lasting brand relationships (Wallace et al., 2022).

However, this study also reveals another interesting dimension: the moderating role of friendship influence. The analysis results show that celebrity credibility's influence on brand love is stronger when the individual has friends who also like the same celebrity or brand. This finding supports previous research emphasizing social influence's importance in consumer decision-making (Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991). When individuals feel that their reference group supports their choices, their confidence in choosing the brand will increase, thereby strengthening brand love.



**Figure 2.**

*Graph to visualize the moderating effect*

The graph titled "Figure 1 graph to visualize the moderating effect" depicts the relationship between 'Celebrity credibility' and 'Brand love', showcasing the impact of 'Friendship' levels as a moderating factor. The x-axis represents 'Celebrity credibility', ranging from -1.00 to 5.00, while the y-axis represents 'Brand love', ranging from 1.00 to 5.00. The graph displays three distinct lines for varying levels of 'Friendship': Low (blue line), Moderate (red line), and High (green line). Notably, as 'Celebrity credibility' increases, there is a corresponding increase in 'Brand love' across all friendship levels. This pattern suggests that friendship plays a moderating role in the relationship between celebrity credibility and brand love. The visual representation effectively communicates the hypothesis that friendship influences brand love, particularly when combined with the credibility of a celebrity endorser. Overall, the graph provides a clear and comprehensible illustration of the interaction between celebrity credibility, friendship, and brand love, contributing valuable insights to the academic discourse on consumer behavior and brand relationships.

However, upon closer examination, it appears that the High Friendship level demonstrates a more pronounced positive effect on the relationship between 'Celebrity credibility' and 'Brand love'. The High Friendship line exhibits a steeper upward trend compared to the Low and Moderate Friendship lines, indicating that stronger friendships

intensify the impact of celebrity credibility on brand love. This suggests that at higher levels of friendship, individuals are more likely to experience heightened brand love in response to perceived celebrity credibility, emphasizing the significant moderating role of friendship in influencing consumer perceptions and attitudes towards brands.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the marketing literature by showing that celebrity influence is not a single entity. The presence of moderating variables such as friendship influence suggests that the effectiveness of using celebrities as endorsers is greatly influenced by the social context in which consumers are located. The practical implication of this finding is that companies need to consider not only the credibility of the celebrity they choose but also how the message will be disseminated and received by the consumer's social group.

This finding also has implications for influencer marketing strategies. Marketers need to understand that an influencer's influence comes not only from the number of followers they have, but also from the strength of the social relationships they have with their followers. In other words, influencers who are able to build a strong and engaged community will have a greater influence in influencing consumer purchasing decisions.

### **Managerial Implications**

The practical implications of this study are highly relevant to marketing practitioners seeking to leverage celebrity endorsements in their branding strategies. With a deeper understanding of the importance of celebrity credibility in shaping brand love, companies can be more careful in selecting celebrities who are not only well-known but also credible in the eyes of consumers. Furthermore, the recognition that social influence can moderate the relationship between celebrity credibility and brand love provides an opportunity to integrate more social interaction strategies into marketing campaigns, strengthening consumer engagement and strengthening brand loyalty.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, this study reveals that in the context of celebrity endorsement, celebrity credibility plays a significant role in influencing the formation of brand love among consumers. The findings suggest that consumers' belief in celebrity credibility can strengthen their emotional attachment to the endorsed brand. In addition, the study also highlights the importance of social influence, especially in the context of social media friendships, which can moderate the relationship between celebrity credibility and increased brand love. Increased social interaction can strengthen the intensity of consumers' positive feelings toward the brand, thus providing valuable insights for marketing practitioners in developing more holistic and competitive strategies that not only consider the choice of credible celebrities but also utilize social interaction to strengthen consumers' emotional attachment to the brand.

### **Limitations**

However, this study also has limitations that need to be considered. The potential for respondent bias in providing answers and the limitation of the generalizability of the findings to only a certain group of respondents may affect the validity and applicability of the results of this study more broadly. In addition, time and resource constraints may have limited the depth of analysis that could be conducted, thus affecting the extent to which this study can explain the relationship between celebrity credibility, social influence, and brand love.

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