**Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement on Social Media towards Consumer’s Purchase Intention**

**Abstract**

In spite of numerous theoretical and empirical studies that examine celebrity endorsement on traditional media, few studies have attempted to examine the relationship between Source Characteristics and Consumer Purchase Intention in the domain of social media. Furthermore whether this relationship is differ from Male to Female is not empirically investigated. This study combines Source credibility and Source Attractiveness theories to oversee Source Characteristics factors on Consumer’s Purchasing Intention. As a result Source Attractiveness dimensions namely Source Familiarity, Source Likeability and Source Similarity have been introduced to the Source Characteristics which is the main theoretical contribution.

A sample of 338 consumers who use social media for FMCG product purchase decisions responded to the survey. The results provided preliminary support for the hypothesized model. It was found that there is a positive relationship between Source Expertness, Source Trustworthiness, Source Likeability, Source Similarity and Consumer’s Purchase Intention while there is a negative relationship between Source Familiarity and Consumer’s Purchase Intention. The study further revealed that the impact of Source Expertness, Source Trustworthiness, Source Likeability, and Source Similarity is different for male and female consumers. Thus, in promotional campaigns a product which is used by only one particular gender has to concern itself with the characteristics of that particular gender, and Source Familiarity should not concern itself with gender diversity in celebrity endorsement since it has no impact on the relationship between Source Familiarity and a Consumer’s Purchase Intention.

**Keywords:** Celebrity Endorsement, Social Media, Source Characteristics and Consumer’s Gender.

**Introduction**

Advertising is one of the elements in the marketing mix, containing a variety of methods which a company could use to reach out and communicate with current and potential consumers (Forouhandeh, Nejatian, Ramanathan, & Forouhandeh, 2011). Effective advertising is crucial for the company in influencing their customers to buy their products. Since advertising is the primary way in which the company communicates with its customers, it is an area of significance for companies to focus on (Witt, 1999). Companies invest billions of dollars/rupees in advertising. Among the different modes of advertising, celebrity endorsement has become a key mode.

Celebrity endorsement is a way of brand or advertising campaign that involves a well-known person using his/her fame to help promote a product or service. In a market with a very high proliferation of local, regional and international brands, celebrity endorsement was thought to provide a distinct differentiation (Martin Roll, 2006). The use of celebrity endorsement in marketing is not a new phenomenon (Van der Waldt et. 2009).However, Celebrity endorsement has become a global phenomenon, with companies using endorsers as part of their marketing communication strategy to support their corporate or brand image on different channels, both in traditional media and in digital marketing media (Jatto, 2013).

Source Characteristics explains the characteristics which a celebrity(Celebrity) should possess. Source Credibility Theory and Source Attractiveness Theory provide a basis on which the methodology of celebrity endorsement rests and they also explain how the process of celebrity endorsement influences the minds of consumers. The Source Credibility Theory states that acceptance of the message depends on the Expertness of the celebrity as well as on his/her Trustworthiness. Source Expertness is about the perceived ability of the source to make valid assertions and Source Trustworthiness describes the perceived willingness of the source to make valid assertions regarding the product (Ohaninan,1990).

The Source Attractiveness Theory, which is based on social psychological research, argues that the acceptance of the message depends on Source Familiarity, Source Likeability and Source Similarity. Source Familiarity means the audience's knowledge of the source through exposure. Affection for the source's physical appearance and behavior is known as Source Likeability and Source Similarity of the source is the likeness between source and receiver (Jatto, 2013).Source Similarity, Source Familiarity and Source Likeability have not been tested in previous research studies in the context of the impact of celebrity endorsement on Consumer’s Purchase Intention. Previous literature looked at consumer purchase intention in terms of source credibility (Jatto,2013). Drawing from Source Attractiveness Theory the researcher argues that both Source Credibility and Source Attractiveness could influence consumer purchase intention. Current literature, however, lacks a clear understanding of the relationship between Source Characteristics and the Consumer’s Purchasing Intention. Source Characteristics of a celebrity can influence the attitude of the consumer (Jatto, 2013) and Consumer Purchase Intention is considered an attitude of the consumer previous research reveals that Source Expertness and Source Trustworthiness have been examined in the context of purchase intention. Thus, it could be predicted that all the other factors could influence purchase intention too.

There have been some works of theoretical literature that consider a celebrity’s gender as a moderator of the relationship between celebrity endorsement and the consumer’s purchase intention. There has been prior research on gender differences which has been limited to celebrities’ gender and its impact on the consumer’s purchasing Intention (Widgery and McGaugh 1993; Berney-Riddish and Areni 2006: Wolin 2003). The literature review found very little information about the moderating effect of a consumer’s gender on celebrity endorsement in the social media context, and thus the researcher has taken the consumer’s gender as the moderator for the current study.

The current research drew on Source Credibility Theory and Source Attractiveness Theory to expand the existing theoretical understanding of the relationship between Source Characteristics and Consumer’s Purchase Intention. This paper recognizes that a consumer’s gender plays a vital role in this relationship Therefore, by testing the hypothesized theoretical model (Figure1), this paper provides a more comprehensive examination of the relationship between Source Characteristics and Consumer’s Purchase Intention, and the moderating effect of the Consumer’s Gender on this relationship in the context of social media.

Published studies on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on social media on Consumer Purchase Intention have been limited to Africa (Zipporah, 2014), Europe (Jatto, 2014) and the Far East (Hai-xia et al., 2015; Sharfina (2015). On the contrary, there is a lack of published empirical studies on the topic of celebrity endorsement on social media and purchase intention set in the Sri Lankan context. In terms of the Sri Lankan context, research has been done in order to investigate the impact of celebrity endorsement on brand equity in cosmetic products (Sivesan,2013).Another research study focuses on determining factors that influence the relationship between celebrity endorsement and perceived brand equity (Dissanayake,2015) in the traditional media. The current paper aims to contribute to and generate knowledge on the consequences and effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on social media on consumer purchase intention from the Sri Lankan perspective. There exists a knowledge gap in the research area in the Sri Lankan context as well. Therefore the e researcher argues that there is a research gap in Sri Lanka in relation to celebrity endorsement on social media and study its impact on the purchase intention of consumers.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between celebrity endorsement on social media and consumer’s purchasing intension and the effect of the gender of the consumer on this relationship. The participants of the study are consumers of Sri Lanka who use social media actively. Consumers who are active users of social media have an opportunity to view celebrity endorsement when compared to other inactive users. Jatto (2013) asserts that the policies and methods used previously to secure the best celebrities from traditional media are likely to be ineffective with social media. According to Jatto (2013), it is essential to understand the relationship between the Source Characteristics of celebrities used in social media and the impact on consumer’s purchase intentions of an organization’s advertising practices. Therefore, when choosing endorsing celebrities, it is essential to understand the consumer’s expectations in order to maintain a productive outcome.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows: In the following section, the existing literature related to the factors affecting celebrity endorsement has been reviewed and the hypotheses formulated. Next, the methodology undertaken to administer the study has been discussed. Subsequently, the data analysis process, the findings and implications have been discussed. Finally, the limitations and suggestions for further research have been presented, together with the concluding remarks.

**Literature Review**

***Social Media***

Social media is defined as “a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). The characteristics of social media, according to Kaplan and Haenlein , 2010 are as follows; social media is user based. Without users social networks would be an empty space filled with empty forums, applications. Users populate the network with conversations and content. The direction of that content is determined by **anyone** who takes part in the discussion. This is what make social networks so much more exciting and dynamic for Internet users. Another characteristic of social media is that it is much more interactive than traditional media. Social networks are built from and thrive on community concepts. Another unique characteristic of social networks is the emotional factor. While websites of the past were focused primarily on providing information to a visitor, the social network actually provides users with emotional security. This means that just like communities or social groups around the world are founded on the fact that members hold common beliefs or hobbies, social networks are based on the same principle Practitioners, therefore, view social media as a platform to connect with consumers(Garcia ,Exposito ,Vertigo & Medias, 2014).

With the aid of “Uses and Gratification theory”, Whiting and Williams (2013) explore some of the reasons people have for using social media. They conclude that people use social media mainly for social interaction, information seeking, to pass time, as entertainment and for relaxation. Social media sites are inexpensive, user -friendly and are also available and accessible for free .In addition, people use social media as an alternative to face -to -face communication (Whiting and Williams, 2013). It is more likely for a fan to follow their favorite celebrity on social media than for them to run into the celebrity in reality. Following their favorite celebrity on social media therefore acts as an alternative to physical communication.

Interactivity is more prominent on social media than other form of advertising media, as there is a two-way communication channel between celebrities and their followers ; celebrities are able to respond immediately to questions posed by their followers (Bright and Cunningham, 2012). This explains the need for celebrities and their fans to use social media, as celebrities want to interact with their fans globally and fans want to be a part of the exclusiveness that is their favorite celebrity’s world (Bright and Cunningham, 2012).As people use social media to seek information (Whiting and William, 2013), it is understandable that fans follow their favorite celebrities on social media in order to gain information on their lives, without waiting for the next edition of a magazine (Bright and Cunningham, 2012).

***Celebrity Endorsement***

A person who enjoys public recognition from a large share of a certain group of people and uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer article by appearing with it in advertisements is known as a celebrity (McCracken ,1989). Endorsement is defined as any advertising message (including verbal statement, demonstrations, or depictions of the name, signature, likeness or other identifying personal characteristics of an individual or the name or seal of an organization) which consumers are likely to believe reflects the opinions, beliefs, findings or expertise of a party other than the sponsoring advertiser. Celebrity endorsement is a ubiquitous characteristic of modern marketing (McCracken 1989).

Kamen, Azhari and Kragh(1975,p.18) suggest that the spokesperson acts as a kind of core around which the substantive messages are positioned. In recent times ,there has been a significant increase in the amount of celebrity endorsements (Boyd and Shank,2004).Celebrities are a common feature in the contemporary market place , often becoming the face or image not only of consumer products and brands, but of organizations themselves (Illicic&Webster , 2011). By pairing a brand with a celebrity, a brand is able to leverage unique and positive secondary brand associations with a celebrity and gain consumer awareness, transfer positive associations tied to the celebrity onto the brand, build brand image and ultimately enhance the endorsed brand’s equity (Keller, 2008). Celebrities not only sell products and brands, they in fact exert powerful influence across all facets of popular culture and public life, influencing consumer attitudes and perceptions (Time Inc., 2006).

Corporations invest significant amounts of money to align themselves and their products with “big” name celebrities in the belief that they will (a) draw attention to the endorsed products/services and (b) transfer image values to these products/services by virtue of their celebrity profile and engaging attributes (Erdogan 1999; Ohanian 1991 ;O’ Mahony and Meenaghan 1998).Celebrity endorsement can be attributed to the number of benefits retailers have seen by utilizing this form of advertisement. Celebrities have the potential/ability to attract an audience’s attention, thereby giving retailers a better chance of communicating their message to consumers (Choi and Rifon ,2007). Another benefit, according to Agrawal and Kamakura (1995), is when a celebrity is paired with a brand-image and the celebrity helps shape the image of that brand.

***Source Characteristics***

Source Characteristics refer to the characteristics that a celebrity possesses that influence the target audience the most (Subhadip, 2012). Theories like the ‘Source Credibility Theory ’and the ‘Source Attractiveness Theory’ provide a basis on which the methodology of celebrity endorsement works and also explains how the process of celebrity endorsement influences the minds of the consumers. The source credibility theory as propounded by Ohanian in 1990 state that people or receivers are more likely to be persuaded when the source presents itself as credible (Hovland , Janis and Kelly 1963). Ohanian (1990) noticed a trend in choosing actors/actresses, athletes and other celebrities as these spokespeople. The Source Credibility theory (Ohanian,1990) helps explain the criteria for this phenomenon. The theory proposes components that determine believability in a brand ambassador, namely, source expertness and source trustworthiness. The more a communicator fits these criteria, the more likely it is to positively affect purchase intent, and vice versa.

Source Expertness is the perceived ability of the source to make valid assertions. Source Trustworthiness is the perceived willingness of the source to make valid assertions. Acceptance of the message depends on 'Expertness' and Trustworthiness' of the source.. Audience acceptance increases with the expertness of the source and the ability of the audience to evaluate the product. Expertise is also known as the authority, competence and qualification a communicator possesses (Ohanian, 1990). Much research has proven that the more credible a person is, the more behaviorally compliant the receiver of that message will be (Ross, 1973). The theory suggests that endorsers are perceived as experts who have sufficient knowledge in a particular area of interest, in this case, beauty. It explains how consumers are persuaded based on the overall perceived credibility, regardless of format (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41). Trustworthiness is “the listener’s degree of confidence in, and level of acceptance of, the speaker and the message” (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41). Several studies have proven that trustworthiness is directly correlated with persuasion and message effectiveness. Miller and Baseheart (1969) found that the more trustworthy a communicator is, the more effective his/her opinion will be to the receiver of that message.

 Source Attractiveness Theory has traditionally been viewed as having three interrelated aspects, namely, Source Familiarity, Source Similarity and Source Likeability. Advertisers have chosen celebrity endorsers on the basis of their attractiveness to gain the dual effects of celebrity status and physical appeal (Singer, 1983) .This theory explains message acceptance in two ways: Identification and Conditioning (Dash and Sabat, 2012). Identification is when the receiver or the target audience of the communication begins to identify with the source's attractiveness, and hence tends to accept his/her opinions, beliefs, habits, attitudes, etc. Conditioning is when the attractiveness of the source is supposed to pass on to the brand after regular association .Attractiveness is another dimension that plays an important role in the initial judgment of the communicator (Baker & Churchill, 1977). Joseph (1982) concluded that attractive communicators are, “consistently liked more and have more positive impact” than less attractive communicators (p.42). Several other researchers have agreed with those findings, reporting that attractiveness enhances positive attitudes (Simon, Berkowitz & Moyer, 1970; Kahle & Homer, 1985). According to Loggerenberg, Waldt &Wehmeyer (2009), “endorsers who are perceived to be attractive are more likely to lead to purchase aspirations.” Given the nature of the cosmetics industry, beauty and attractiveness continue to be significant factors playing a part in the selection of endorsers and spokespeople.

In previous literature, the focus was on source attractiveness and source credibility as the two most important Source Characteristics for a successful endorsement deal (Subhadip, 2012). Among the few works of research conducted in the current area of interest, attributes of source attractiveness have not been measured in terms of the impact of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention (Jatto,2013). Therefore, the current researcher intends to measure source credibility and source attractiveness in order to measure the characteristics of a celebrity that contribute towards the relationship between celebrity endorsement and consumer purchasing intention. In the previous literature, source attractiveness theory has not been measured alongside consumer purchase intention. The researcher’s theoretical contribution is adding source attractiveness theory and source credibility theory to the analysis of the consumer’s purchasing intention. More variables can be added to the study in order to glean more factors that are significant for the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements on social media, as the source characteristics and consumer characteristics used in this survey are not the only possible ones (Jatto , 2013).

***Purchase Intention***

Purchase intention is a kind of decision-making that studies the reason why a particular brand is bought by a consumer (Shah et al., 2012). Whitlark, Geurts and Swenson (1993) define purchase intention as a purchase probability associated with an intention category at the percentage of individuals that will actually buy the product. Morinez et al. (2007) define purchase intention as a situation where consumers tend to buy a certain product in a certain condition. According to the definitions proposed by various scholars, it is the consumer’s decision whether he/she buys the product or not. Therefore it is evident that purchase intention can be defined in different ways. Another such way of defining it is that purchase intention is a plan to purchase particular products or services (Monash University, 2009). In terms of the consumer’s buying role, purchase intention means, “the activities that one or more person(s) might perform in a buying decision.”

Purchase intention is an important factor in the Fishbein Attitude Theory and other consumer attitude models. The Fishbein Attitude Theory presents the clearest theoretical explanation of the term ‘attitude’. According to Fishbein (1967), a person’s attitude is a function of his salient beliefs (beliefs that are activated from memory and “considered” by the person in a given situation) at a given point of time. Mitchell & Olson (1981) investigated this concept by specifying the relationship between the set of salient beliefs of a concept and the overall evaluation of, or attitude toward the concept.

Amos, Holmes and Struton (2008) state that the consumer’s positive attitudes about the source celebrity who endorses the brand serves to enhance the intention towards the buying decision. Ohanian (1991) the message of an advertisement is easily recalled and the likeability of an ad increases due to the involvement of the celebrity, which results in an increase in the purchase intention (Pringle and Binet, 2005). Indirect association between the intention to purchase and the source endorser is also found to be positive by using advertisement as a medium (Goldsmith et al., 2000) .If product attributes are not considered in detail by the consumer, then he/she opts to purchase with celebrity endorsement (Lafferty and Goldsmith, 1999). Significant results regarding purchase intention with the involvement of a celebrity have also been found by Yoon et al., 1998. According to Yoon et al., attractiveness has a great influencing power on purchase intention (Hassana & Jamil, 2014).

**Hypotheses and the Conceptual Framework**

***Trustworthiness of the celebrity and Purchase Intention***

For the purpose of this theoretical paper, trustworthiness can be defined as honesty, integrity and believability of an endorser (Erdogan, 2001). The consumer has a belief that celebrities are generally trustworthy sources of communicating information (Goldsmith et al., 2000). Atkin and Block (1983) postulate that celebrities are perceived to be more trustworthy than non-celebrities, since consumers are more easily influenced by someone they perceive to be having higher standards. Researchers found that the trustworthiness of an advertising endorser is one of the important factors in obtaining customer purchase intention. The higher the trustworthiness, the higher the positive advertising and brand attitudes are (Goldsmith et. al., 1999). According to Clinton et al. (2008), many studies support the fact that trustworthiness affects the effectiveness of the advertising. Miller and Baseheart (1969) point out in their studies that a highly trustworthy communicator who delivers an opinionated message produces an effective attitude change. In another study, Yoon, Kim, and Kim (1998) found that trustworthiness is an important predictor of purchase intention, the attitude toward the advertisement and the attitude toward the brand in the United States and Korea .Based on the literature, the researcher posits the following hypothesis.

*H1: Trustworthiness of celebrity endorsement on social media has a positive effect on the consumer’s purchase intention.*

***Expertness of the celebrity and Purchase Intention***

An endorser with expert knowledge and skills has a strong power of recommendation when compared to endorsers with low expertise (Ohanian, 1990). Ohanian (1990) holds that the definition of the spokesman’s expertness holds that he/she possesses domain knowledge with which to judge the product. As message communicators, the fact whether spokesmen have expertness or not, would play a critical role in the buyers’ purchasing decisions. Expertness and the claims celebrities make would affect consumers. Ohanian (1991) also found that expertness would influence the consumer’s buying intention more than attraction and trustworthiness (Yang & Huang, 2011). Based on the literature, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis.

*H2: Expertness towards celebrity endorsement on social media has a positive effect on consumer’s purchase intention.*

***Similarity of the celebrity and Purchase Intention***

According to Karen (2015), the similarity of celebrity endorsers to consumers has a positive and significant relationship with consumer’s purchase intention, since consumers felt that they had a lot in common with endorsers. This indicator has the most influential impact on consumer purchasing intention. Women may be more attracted to models in advertisements when they feel some sort of similarity to the model. Kozar and Damhorst (2008) found that older women (60 to 80 years old) who felt more similar to a model in an advertisement had stronger positive beliefs about the model’s appearance, fashion sense, and thus, stronger purchase intention. Perceived similarity is influenced by the perceived age of a model and had a positive effect on beliefs about the model’s appearance in terms of perceived attractiveness and impressiveness (Kozar &Damhorst, 2008).

*H3: Similarity towards celebrity endorsement on social media has a positive effect on consumer purchase intention*

***Familiarity of the celebrity and Purchase Intention***

Familiarity refers to the level of knowledge of a source through exposure (Belch & Belch, 2003, p.172). The company chooses a celebrity who utilizes his or her knowledge in the exposure phase (Dimed & Joulyana, 2005).The effect of familiarity on attitude increases when there are brief exposures of the celebrity and when there are longer delays between the exposures. The effect decreases when there are long exposures of the celebrity and when there are shorter delays between the exposures (Bornstein, 1989). When companies choose a celebrity, it is important to what extent consumers are familiar with the celebrity. The more familiar the consumer is with the celebrity, the more positive the effect will be. It is also well known that consumers who are more familiar with a celebrity and are more exposed to a celebrity, will automatically like a celebrity more; this is called the mere exposure effect (Zajonc, 1968).

*H4: Familiarity towards celebrity endorsement on social media has a positive effect on consumer purchase intention.*

***Likeability of the celebrity and Purchase Intention***

McGuire (1985) states that when people like the celebrity they will also like the accompanying brand and this is why celebrities are used in commercials and advertisements. Celebrity endorsement will thus influence consumer behavior and attitude (Belch & Belch, 2001) and advertisers believe that a celebrity can influence a consumer’s vision of the company’s image. Likeability is the “affection for the source as a result of the source’s physical appearance and behaviour” (McGuire, 1985). The researcher recognizes that the hypothesis drawn below is based on literature that was scarce in terms of the concept of likeability.

*H5: Likeability towards celebrity endorsement on social media has a positive effect on consumer’s purchase intention*

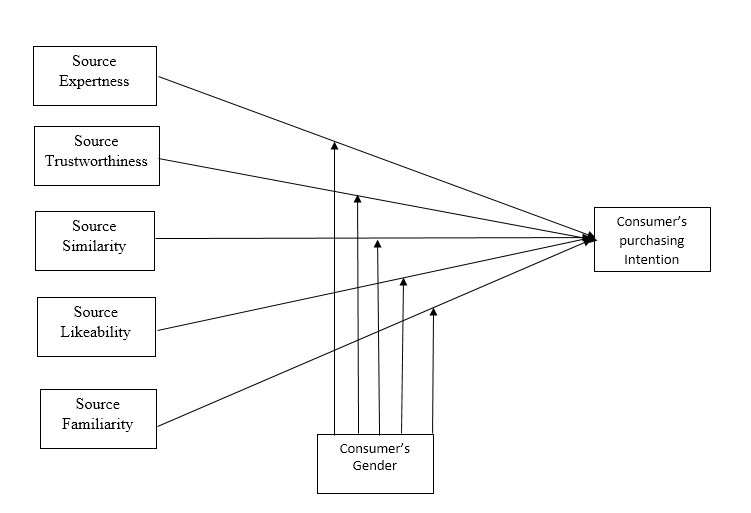
***The Moderating effect of the Consumer’s Gender***

A number of studies have explored several factors related to the impact of using celebrities as product endorsers. However, surprisingly few studies have examined the impact that the gender of the target audience member might have on who responds to celebrity endorsements. The results from published research regarding this issue have been mixed at best. Ohaninan (1991) reported that there were no significant effects of gender in her study of the impact of gender on consumer’s perceptions of a celebrity’s attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise, nor on the likelihood of purchasing a product that was endorsed by a celebrity. There has been previous research on gender differences regarding persuasiveness,, that has shown that in general, men and women respond differently to persuasive messages, with women being more easily persuaded than men (Widgery and Mc Gaugh 1993; Wollin,2003).There has been a stream of research regarding reactions to complex advertising based on gender . Thus men and women will differ in response to a celebrity endorser in advertising, and the following hypothesis has been posited on that basis.

*H6: A consumer’s gender moderates the relationship between the source characteristics of the celebrity and consumer purchase intention.*

Based on the literature review, the researcher has developed several hypotheses for this study. On logical grounds there is a relationship between consumer purchasing intention and Source Characteristics, further influenced by the gender of the consumer, which is the moderating variable .Source Characteristics is taken as the independent variable and trustworthiness, expertness, similarity, familiarity, and likeability of the celebrity and purchasing intention are taken as dependent variables.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study**



**Methodology**

***Participants and Procedure***

This study lies in the positivistic research domain. It is not possible to draw a clear estimate about the size of the population or the sampling frame due to the unavailability of a complete listing of the number of consumers who use social media in order to purchase FMCG products in Sri Lanka. The researcher selected the FMCG sector, because currently in industry, Sri Lankan celebrities are mainly used in the FMCG industry rather than to advertise other products/services like Automobiles and Sports (Daily FT, 2015).

Out of the total population, a sample of 400 consumers was selected to gather primary data. The unit of analysis of the study was the individual as the problem statement focused on identifying the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on social media of consumer’s Purchase Intention (Sekaran, 2010). Hence the unit of analysis of the study is the individual consumer who uses social media for FMCG product purchase decisions. A convenience sampling technique was adopted. Data was collected through a well-developed structured questionnaire. Accordingly, a cross sectional study was conducted.

***Measures***

The consumer’s responses were assessed covering Source Expertness, Source Trustworthiness, Source Similarity and Source Likeability. These were measured by a scale developed byPeetz, Theodore Byrne (2012), a seven point Likert type scale (7= Strongly agree to 1= strongly disagree) ,with items coded such that higher scores indicated greater agreement.

Source Expertness is measured using a 6 item scale. Sample items for Source Expertness are “When I viewed this advertisement I believed the endorser was an expert”, “When I viewed this advertisement I felt the endorser was knowledgeable”. Source Trustworthiness is measured by using a 6 item scale. Sample items for Source Trustworthiness are “When I viewed the advertisement on social media I felt the celebrity was trustworthy”, “When I viewed the advertisement on social media I found the celebrity to be believable.

Source Likeabilityis measured using a 6 item scale. Sample items for Source Likeability are “When I viewed the advertisement on social media I liked the celebrity”, “When I viewed the advertisement on social media I found the celebrity to be likeable by others.” Source Similarity is measured using a 6 item scale. Sample items for Source Similarity are “When I viewed the advertisement on social media I viewed the endorser as similar to me”, “When I viewed the advertisement on social media I identified with the endorser”. Source Familiarity is measured using a 5 item scale. Scales were developed by Peetz, Theodore Byrne,(2012) .Sample items for Source Familiarity are,” When I viewed the advertisement on social media I recognized the celebrity ,” When I viewed the advertisement on social media I knew who the celebrity was.(recognized as a singer /actor/ sportsman/ by name)”.

Purchase Intention is measured by using a 7 point Likert scale developed by Gefen & Straub, (2004). Items for purchase intention are “I am very likely to buy the product from the seller”, “I would consider buying the product form the seller in the future” and “I intend to buy the product from the seller. “

**Data Analysis and Results**

In order to carry out the data analysis of the study, 600 questionnaires were distributed to consumers Out of those, 400 consumers who use social media for product purchasing decisions were selected to gather data. Those 400 respondents were selected through a question, namely, “Do you use social media for FMCG product purchase decisions?” and 338 usable responses were collected. The collected data was subjected to a preliminary scan for accuracy and precision. Then it was subjected to a cleaning process. The purpose was to identify outliers and provide treatment for missing values. The data analysis was initiated by entering data into the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20.0. Several plot diagrams /graphs helped in identifying the outliers and there were no outliers in the data set. A pilot study was conducted primarily in order to assess the extent of reliability and validity of the research questionnaire. In order to measure the face validity the current questionnaire was reviewed by the supervisor of the study and one senior academic to ensure that the research items (Questions) appear to do what they claim to do (Sekaran, 2010) In order to ensure reliability , Cronbach’s coefficient alpha (Cronbach, 1946) was used.

Data screening and a preliminary descriptive analysis were conducted using SPSS (Version 22.0). Preliminary descriptive analysis was carried out using statistical techniques such as measures of central tendency, mean, mode, median and measure of dispersion. Common method variance was also checked before hypothesis testing. Several multivariate assumptions such as normality, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity were assessed prior to hypothesis testing. CFA and SEM were carried out using AMOS (Version22.0; Arbuckle&Wothke,2009).The current study adopted the following fit indices –standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), Goodness of fit index(GFI),Tucker Lewis Index(TLI),comparative fit index(CFI) , parsimony comparative fit index (PCFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the Chi Square statistic were used in the data analysis to assess the adequacy of the measurement and the structural models, as well as to report any misspecifications or violations of the assumptions of CFA and SEM. Values for the GFI,CFI,TLI, and PCFI were between 0 and 1, with values closer to 1 representing a better finding model. Additionally a value of .05 or less for SRMR and a value of 0.08 or less for RMSEA were indicative of good fit. Cronbach’s alpha was performed to ensure the purification of the scale. In order to maintain convergent validity, CFA was performed by using structural equation modeling (SEM).

**Measurement Model**

The measurement model focuses on establishing the validity and reliability of the measures used to represent each construct of the measurement model. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with the structural equation model (SEM) was performed using AMOS 20.0 software. The whole measurement model was developed based on First Order Confirmatory factor results for each construct. To validate scales in this study, factor scores, average variance extracted (AVE), Composite reliability (CR) and squared multiple correlation vs. AVE were calculated. The results of the descriptive statistics, reliability and validity testing are given in Table1.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach’s Alpha, AVE,CR**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variable** | **Mean** | **Standard deviation** | **Cronbach’s Alpha** | **CR** | **AVE** |
| Source Expertness | 4.2396 | 1.40319 | 0.815 | 0.969 | 0.524 |
| Source Trustworthiness | 4.8343 | 1.21345 | 0.856 | 0.936 | 0.506 |
| Source Likeability | 5.0991 | 1.15111 | 0.819 | 0.952 | 0.507 |
| Source Similarity | 4.5695 | 1.39792 | 0.803 | 0.971 | 0.529 |
| Source Familiarity | 5.1787 | 1.10166 | 0.870 | 0.887 | 0.547 |
| Purchase Intention | 4.9999 | 1.10166 | 0.816 | 0.860 | 0.673 |

*Source*: Survey Data

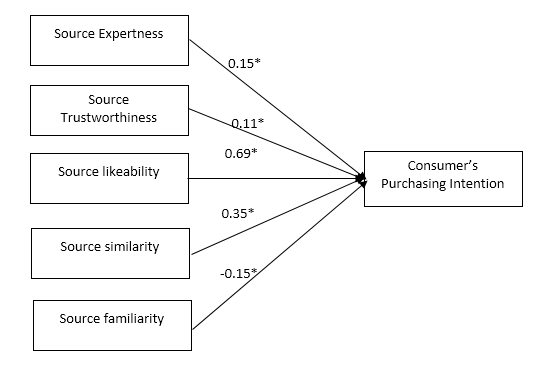
Goodness of Fit (GOF) indices of the measurement model confirmed the appropriateness of the model. It is generally recommended that multiple indices should be considered simultaneously when overall model fit is evaluated.

**Structural Model**

In order to achieve the objectives, one of which is to identify the relationship between Source Characteristics and consumer purchasing intention, it was hypothesized that there is a positive relationship between Source Characteristics and purchasing intention, Accordingly, the proposed structural model was formulated to test the basic relationships (only independent and dependent) . With regard to absolute fit indices, which determine how well the a priori model fits the sample data (McDonald & Ho, 2002), traditionally an omnibus cut-off point of 0.90 has been recommended for the GFI. With regard to the first structural model, GFI shows a moderate model fit with a value of 0.760. RMR, which is an immediately interpretable measure of the discrepancies (Byrne, 1998; Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000), indicates a good fit with a value of 0.143. Those relying on the RMSEA generally accept the authoritative claim that a RMSEA less than .05 corresponds to a “good” fit and a RMSEA less than .08 corresponds to an “acceptable” fit (Browne & Cudeck 1993). With a RMSEA value of 0.102 it can be stated that with regard to Source Characteristics and consumer purchasing intention the model, with unknown but optimally chosen parameter estimates would fit the populations covariance matrix well (Byrne, 1998).

CIMIN/DF value is 2.98 indicating that the model confirmed good fit. With regard to incremental fit indices, an IFI value of .85 can be recognized as indicative of a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). A TLI value of 0.832 and a CFI value of 0.855 indicate that there is a good fit between the data and the model.

**Figure 2: Structural model for direct effects**

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In addition to the above direct relationship, this study attempts to examine the effect of a consumer’s gender on the relationship between Source Characteristics and Consumer Purchasing Intention. In order to accomplish that objective, it was hypothesized that in general, men and women respond differently to persuasive messages, with women being more easily persuaded than men (Widgery and McGaugh 1993; Wollin,2003). Thus, men and women will differ in response to a celebrity endorser in advertising, and in line with this argument, the following hypothesis has been postulated, that a consumer’s gender moderates the relationship between Source Characteristics of the celebrity and the consumer’s Purchase Intention. Since the moderating variable of the current study is categorical, a multi group analysis method has been deployed.

**Table 2: Hypotheses for Male and Female**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Male** | | **Female** | |
| ***β* value** | ***P* value** | ***β* value** | ***P* value** |
| exp🡪pi  tru🡪pi  like🡪pi  sim🡪pi  fam🡪pi | 0.17  0.16  0.65  0.41  -0.04 | 0.003  0.009  0.000  0.000  0.480 | 0.19  0.13  0.70  0.26  -0.24 | 0.000  0.032  0.000  0.000  0.000 |

*\*Significant at 0.05 level*

Consumer Gender moderates the interaction between Source Characteristics and Consumer Purchasing Intention. The result is significant and it can be concluded that consumer gender moderates the positive relationship between Source Expertness, Source Trustworthiness, Source Similarity, Source Likeability and Consumer Purchasing Intention. The results are not significant for Source Familiarity (Refer Table 2).

**Discussion**

This research focused on examining the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on social media on Consumer’s Purchase Intention. According to the findings, there is a positive relationship between Source Expertness, Source Trustworthiness, Source Likeability, Source Similarity and the Consumer’s Purchase Intention. Furthermore, the findings show that there is a negative relationship between Source Familiarity and the Consumer’s Purchase Intention.

Source Expertness is accepted as the most important Source Characteristic for the endorsement to be successful, as Daneshvary and Schwer have indicated (2000: 204). Celebrities might be perceived as having more expertise about the product than other ordinary spokespersons. (Van der Waldt et al., 2009). Similarly, Crano (1970) experimentally manipulated the dimensions of expertise and found that subjects exposed to an expert source exhibited more agreement with the advocated position than did those exposed to a low-expertise source. So the findings of the current study further authenticated the findings of other researchers (Horai, Naccari, and Fatoullah 1974; Maddux and Rogers 1980; Mills and Harvey 1972; Ross 1973). Their research shows that Source Expertness positively affects a Consumer’s Purchasing Intention.

Source Trustworthiness of the communicator (celebrity) is an important construct in persuasion and attitude-change research. Priester & Petty (2003) noted that if a celebrity endorser is perceived to be highly trustworthy, a consumer might not scrutinize the advertising message as much and may unthinkingly accept the conclusion as valid. Further, with the widespread use of celebrities and athletes in paid commercials, the audience does not associate a high level of trustworthiness with individuals who get paid handsomely to promote a product. These explanations seem to imply that respondents perceive low trustworthiness as being a common characteristic among celebrities and thus tend to ignore their message. According to the studies that have investigated Source Trustworthiness and Consumer Purchasing Intention, the results suggest that Source Trustworthiness of the celebrity influences the Consumer’s Purchasing Intention.

McGuire (1985) stated that when people like the celebrity, they also like the accompanying brand, and therefore celebrities are used in commercials and advertisements. Thus celebrity endorsement will influence consumer behavior and attitude (Belch & Belch, 2001) and advertisers believe that a celebrity can influence the consumer’s vision of the company’s image. A Consumer’s Purchase Intention is a part of his/her attitude towards the product/service. So the hypothesis, that there is a positive relationship between Source Likeability and Consumer’s Purchasing Intention, was advanced. This finding is one of the main contributions of the present study to the existing body of literature. According to the researcher’s readings, likeability has not been conceptualized as an independent variable in relation to purchasing intention , while other variables such as Brand Equity (Jatto, 2013) and negative and positive word of mouth(Ciadini , 2015) have been tested in relation to Source Likeability. According to these findings, the researcher concludes that when the celebrity possesses a good combination of a magnetic personality, attractive physical appearance and humor, he /she will be likeable to the consumers. Ultimately, this will lead to the purchasing intention of the particular product /service as well.

Similarity to the model and attraction to the model often go hand in hand when a person views an advertisement (Buckley, 1984). Byrne (1971) contended that in order for one person to be attracted to another, a feeling of similarity must exist. In previous research, similarity in perceived attitudes had the greatest effect on attraction to a same-sex person, similarity in dress had the next greatest effect, while attractiveness of dress had the least effect on attraction (Buckley & Roach, 1981).

Thus, women may be more attracted to models in advertisements when they feel some sort of similarity to the model. Kozar and Damhorst (2008) found that older women (60 to 80 years old) who felt more similar to a model in an advertisement had strong positive beliefs about the model’s appearance, fashion ability, and purchase intention in the context of traditional media. Perceived similarity was influenced by the perceived age of a model and had a positive effect on beliefs about the model’s appearance in terms of perceived attractiveness and impressiveness (Kozar&Damhorst, 2008). Today, people can view their favorite celebrity easily, and get to know their life events, choices of food, choices of clothing, their lifestyles and much more due to social media. People tend to be fans and follow celebrities who have similar life choices on social networks (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube , Twitter) . When consumers see a celebrity as a product endorser on social media, they intend to purchase the product if the consumer feels that the celebrity is very similar to himself/herself. Same gender, similar dress sense and similar lifestyle can be factors that influence people to think that celebrities are similar to them. Accordingly the present study found that the hypothesis which states that there is a positive relationship between Source Likeability and Consumer Purchasing Intention is accepted**.**

It is well known that consumers, who are more familiar with a celebrity and are more exposed to a celebrity, will automatically like a celebrity more. This is called the mere exposure effect (Zajonc, 1968). There is a scarcity of research performed in the area of Source Familiarity and its relationship on the Consumer’s Purchase Intention, According to Zajonc, 1968 it is revealed that the more the celebrity is familiar, the more the consumer develops a positive attitude towards the celebrity. Consumers tend to identify with celebrities that they have seen very often in the traditional /social media. Today, most Sri Lankan celebrities have an official fan page on Facebook and/or Instagram. Those celebrities share their personal and professional life events on social media frequently. A higher frequency of seeing the celebrity in the social media makes the celebrity more familiar to people for a certain time period. Eventually when such celebrities endorse products / services on social media, consumers quickly identify them by name /appearance/ or by the field he /she represents. Consumers tend to believe and follow familiar celebrities rather than unfamiliar celebrities when they intend to purchase a product. But when they see the same celebrity for a very long time, then there will be sensory adaptation. Thus, in line with the preceding argument, the researcher hypothesized that there is a negative relationship between Source Familiarity and the Consumer’s Purchase Intention. The revelations of the current study do not supports the theoretical argument that there is a positive relationship between Source Familiarity and Consumer Purchase Intention, and this happens to be another significant contribution to the literature.

Ohaninan (1991) reported that there were no significant effects of gender in her study of the impact of gender on a consumer’s perceptions of a celebrity’s attractiveness, trustworthiness or expertise, nor was there likelihood of the consumer purchasing a product that was endorsed by that celebrity. There has been previous research on gender differences in persuasion that has shown that in general, men and women respond differently to persuasive messages with women being more easily persuaded than men (Widgery and McGaugh 1993;Wollin,2003).There has been a stream of research regarding reactions to complex advertising based on gender. However, very few research studies have focused on the consumer’s gender in terms of celebrity endorsement.

The study contributes to the body of knowledge in the research area by revealing that the results were significant for Source Familiarity and also with regard to Consumer’s Purchase Intention among female consumers. The results also reveal that the relationship between Source Familiarity and Purchase intention is negative. It explains further that there is no impact of the consumer’s gender to the relationship between Source Familiarity and Consumer’s Purchase Intention.

***Theoretical Implications***

The existing knowledge on celebrity endorsement and purchasing intention largely focuses on the celebrity’s expertness and trustworthiness (Jatto, 2013).To date there has been very little attempt at testing how Source Attractiveness factors: Source Likeability, Source Similarity and Source Familiarity, affect Consumer Purchasing Intention. Drawing from Source Attractiveness theory, this study seeks to contribute towards filling this gap by defining a Consumer’s Purchase Intention with Source Credibility Factors (Source Expertness and Source Trustworthiness) and adding Source Attractiveness factors (Source Familiarity, Source Similarity and Source Likeability) as well. Currently the arguments of Source Attractiveness theory have been little utilized and empirical testing of the theory is very minimal .Further, there is no evidence regarding the relationship between Source Attractiveness and Consumer Purchase Intention. Even though previous studies have identified the potential of Source Credibility ( (Jatto, 2013) .The present researcher has taken Source Attractiveness into consideration in order to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by adding source attractiveness to explain the model. Therefore, Source Familiarity , Source Similarity and Source Likeability are also used to explain Consumer Purchase Intention.

In addition, the current study presents another theoretical contribution on how the gender of the consumer moderates the framework and contributes towards the relationship between Source Characteristics (Source Expertise, Source Trustworthiness, Source Familiarity, Source Similarity and Source Likeability) and Consumer Purchasing Intention This will broaden the existing body of knowledge by further explaining the relationship. There has been previous research on gender differences in persuasion that has shown that in general, men and women respond differently to persuasive messages, with women being more easily persuaded than men (Widgery and McGaugh 1993; Wollin, 2003). Senior managers need to understand the importance of the consumer’s gender and be willing to support and play an aggressive role in decision-making. These findings are in line with the aforesaid arguments and are thus empirically verified.

Consequently, this research contributes towards predicting the consumer’s Purchase Intention with the direct effect of Source Credibility factors (Source Expertness, Source Trustworthiness), Source Attractiveness factors (Source Familiarity, Source Likeability and Source Similarity) and the moderating effect of the Consumer’s Gender.

***Managerial Implications***

Together with the theoretical contribution being made towards the advancement of the existing knowledge, this research provides several managerial implications. Celebrity endorsement can be widely seen among traditional media. With the increased usage of social media, it is important for marketers to know about the impact of Source Characteristics on the Consumer’s Purchase Intention on social media. As recommended by other research studies (Bright and Cunningham, 2012; Jin and Phua ,2014;Ohanin,1990 ) it is important to carefully select a celebrity endorser who is credible, trustworthy and fits with the product when undertaking a marketing campaign with celebrity endorsement. Practitioners should be aware of the gender of their target market when they focus on selecting their celebrity endorsers.

The results of this study can help marketers and/or advertising agencies to better understand how each type of credibility stimulus can contribute to eliciting a positive attitude toward the advertisement, eventually affecting Consumer Purchase Intentions. Firstly, a celebrity who wants to endorse a product must have attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise. While attractiveness and expertise are easily attained, trustworthiness is cannot be easily ascertained. To be trustworthy, celebrities must maintain a clean reputation. They must avoid circumstances that may tarnish their reputation and trustworthiness in front of the public. Thus, celebrity image and the company/product image become closely related. To increase their trustworthiness, celebrities must be seen as users of their products. Secondly, the claims made in the advertisement endorsed by celebrities must be believable and substantiated. The advertisement must look genuine and not exaggerated. This study is expected to create awareness among marketers of the importance of considering different gender groups according to the different products a celebrity endorses. Thus, in promotional campaigns, a product which is used by only one particular gender, has to reflect those gender characteristics, and Source Familiarity should not be concerned with gender diversity in relation to celebrity endorsement, since a consumer’s gender has no impact on the relationship between Source Familiarity and Purchase Intention.

***Reflections on Further Research***

This is a preliminary attempt to understand the effect of Source Characteristics on Consumer’s Purchase Intention on social media. As per the past research, Source Characteristics is the only aspect that could affect a Consumer’s Purchasing Intention in the context of social media (Jatto, 2013). This research shows the possibility of the interaction of Source Characteristics and consumer gender and thus, these interactions could be investigated in future studies. Accordingly, there are various avenues for future research as the future researchers can consider the age groups of the consumers, occupation level of the consumers, education level of the consumers and the IT literacy of consumers, since the context is social media. Accordingly, future researchers can consider all these levels together and in different combinations to uncover various relationships among these factors influencing celebrity endorsement on social media on consumer’s purchase intention

Moreover, as stated above, there is a limitation in generalizing these findings to other industries due to the specific nature of this industry. Therefore, further testing of this proposed theoretical framework in other industries, is required as well. In addition, since celebrity endorsement on social media depends on country-specific factors, future researchers can contribute to the empirical knowledge on this subject by studying this theory in different countries. Another avenue for future research could be highlighted from the methodology perspective. This research could also be carried out using the qualitative approach, as this will provide a deeper insight into the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumer purchase intentions on social media in general. This would help to confirm whether social or traditional media is more effective and would help marketing and advertising practitioners to determine what platforms would be ideally suited for their marketing campaigns. Additionally, a possible recommendation for future research will be to analyze the data using inferential statistics as well as descriptive statistics in order to determine the relationship between Source Characteristics and the Consumer’s Purchasing Intention.

**Conclusion**

The primary purpose of the present study was to find the relationship between purchasing intention and source characteristics. Thus, the deduced literature verifies that relationship by taking each of the dimensions (e.g. Source Credibility and Source Attractiveness) in the source credibility construct .In addition, this paper contributes towards filling the lacuna in the source attractiveness theory and source credibility theory identified by the present researcher. Moreover, the existing gap in the theory at the time the current research was conducted, was that consumers’ purchasing intention was only explained through source credibility theory in terms of celebrity endorsement on social media. A consumer’s purchasing intention in relation to celebrity endorsement is defined by only by source credibility. By using the source attractiveness theory, this paper identified that consumer the relationship between purchase intention and celebrity endorsement includes much more than source credibility. Thus, this paper contributes to the existing knowledge by introducing the new concept, source attractiveness, to the construct purchase intention and in also challenging existing to knowledge. The present study extended Source Characteristics by including Source Expertness, Source Trustworthiness, Source Familiarity, Source Likeability and Source Similarity. In addition, the study contribute to both theories – Source Credibility theory and Source Attractiveness theory - by further elaborating on the effect of the moderating factor, which is gender.

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