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**Brand, corporate, and celebrity credibilities: A reverse effect**

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## Brand, corporate and celebrity credibility: A reverse effect

### Abstract

**Purpose** - Celebrity endorsers are usually considered to bring positive effects to associated nodes, such as brands and corporations. However, limited evidence suggests that brands and corporations are equally responsible for affecting celebrities and their credibility. Drawing on associative network theory, this study explores the effects of brand credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity credibility, both directly and through the mediating and moderating effects of advertising credibility. The research addresses three main issues: (1) whether brand credibility, corporate credibility and advertising credibility have significant effects on celebrity credibility; (2) whether advertising credibility has a significant mediating effect on the effects of brand credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity credibility; and (3) whether advertising credibility has a significant moderating effect on the effects of brand credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity credibility.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study used a quantitative approach involving structural equation modelling. Data was collected from 675 participants from London and focused on four leading international brands, corporations and celebrity endorsers.

**Findings** - The findings show that brand credibility and advertising credibility have positive direct effects on celebrity credibility; and that advertising credibility mediates the effects of both credibility constructs on celebrity credibility. Furthermore, moderating effects of advertising credibility are also found.

**Practical implications** – This study will help managers to understand the reverse effects, i.e., the effects of brand credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity credibility. They will be able to understand that a credible brand and corporation like a credible celebrity can also bring significant effects on the associated elements. This will help them to recruit celebrity

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3 endorsers who have historically earned their credibility from previous endorsements of  
4 credible brands and corporations. Further, these findings will help managers to understand  
5 that credibility of the brand and corporation can also affect the credibility of the associated  
6 advertising, resulting in having a significant effect on the credibility of the celebrity. This on  
7 the consumers' side will enhance their preferences, attitudes, and behaviours, while for the  
8 corporation, it will enhance their economic and commercial performance.  
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17 **Originality** - This is the first study in which a conceptual model based on the reverse effects  
18 of both credibility constructs on celebrity credibility is examined both directly and based on  
19 the moderating and mediating effects of advertising credibility. Hence, the contributions to  
20 the literature are threefold: firstly, the study examines the reverse effect of celebrity  
21 endorsement, whereby the credibility of a brand or corporation is transferred to a celebrity  
22 endorser; secondly, the study examines the mediating and moderating effects of advertising  
23 credibility on this reverse effect; and finally, associative network theory is used to examine  
24 the importance of the model.  
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35 **Keywords** – Brand credibility, corporate credibility, celebrity credibility, advertising  
36 credibility, mediators, moderators  
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40 **Paper type** – Research paper  
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## 1. Introduction

The use of celebrity endorsers is a widely practised phenomenon used to create awareness for brands and corporations. Its history dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the British pottery firm creator Josiah Wedgwood introduced royals as celebrity endorsers. In the same period, leading tobacco businesses signed similar contracts with well-known personalities. This legacy continued into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when various showbusiness personalities were associated with brands. Since the 1970s, celebrity endorsers have been extensively used. Today, 25 to 30 per cent of celebrity endorsers are used in countries like the UK and US, and over 60 per cent are used in some parts of the world (Hussain et al., 2021; Schimmelpfenning, 2018).

Each year, firms invest a huge proportion of their resources in celebrity endorsers, seeking to break through the clutter of competitors and create awareness. It is estimated that as much as 10 per cent of firms' yearly spending goes on celebrity endorsement (Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016; Hussain, 2021). In return, celebrity endorsers improve the credibility of the connected sources and give bundles of meanings to them (Brown and Tiggermann, 2020; Paul and Bhakar, 2017; Shin et al., 2022). They create positive associations in consumers' minds and persuade them to become attached to the connected sources (Brown and Tiggermann, 2020). They leverage their public profiles in the hope of achieving potential benefits by creating attention, increasing awareness of connected sources, enhancing the likelihood of purchase intention and bringing a positive return to firms' market values and revenues (Ding et al., 2011; El Hedhli et al., 2021; Roy et al., 2021).

The importance of celebrity endorsement has led various researchers (Brown and Tiggermann, 2020; Chin et al., 2019; Halder et al., 2021; Nosi et al., 2021; Wang and Liu, 2022) to examine its usefulness in more detail. Numerous models have been developed to achieve this, including meaning transfer model, match-up hypothesis, celebrity credibility,

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3 celebrity identification, etc., which are highly evident in the literature (Erdogan et al., 2001;  
4 Freire et al., 2018; Roy et al., 2021). Other researchers (Halder et al., 2021; Hussain et al.,  
5 2021; 2023a; b) have significantly benefited from these models in their studies. Topics such  
6 as celebrity prevalence, celebrity persuasion, non-evaluative celebrity transfer, celebrity  
7 market value, celebrity parasocial relationships, celebrity-cause related marketing, celebrity  
8 attachment, celebrity social commerce, celebrity destination marketing, etc. are clearly  
9 evident in the literature (Halder et al., 2021; Jin and Ryu, 2020; Roy et al., 2021; Sakib et al.,  
10 2020; Saldanha et al., 2018; Wang and Scheinbaum, 2018).

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22 An emerging but weaker stream of literature on celebrity endorsement focuses on  
23 brand-to-celebrity transfer (Johnson et al., 2022; Yoo et al., 2018). In most cases, researchers  
24 have focused on brand-to-celebrity transfer based on image, equity, perception, negative  
25 meanings, alliance, etc. (Seno and Lukas, 2007; Thomas and Fowler, 2016). However, there  
26 is also weak evidence suggesting that credibility is the key determinant of brands and  
27 corporations when evaluating value and equity, when compared to other nebulous constructs  
28 (Haig, 2015; Hussain, 2021; Jeng et al., 2016). Credible brands and corporations influence  
29 consumers and transfer positive information to celebrities, while brands and corporations that  
30 lack credibility could badly damage the reputation and career of celebrity endorsers  
31 (Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016; Hsieh and Li, 2020; Johnson et al., 2022). As stated earlier, most  
32 researchers (Halder et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2022; Park et al., 2022) have focused on other  
33 constructs while overlooking the importance that one credible source can bring to others. A  
34 credible source can reduce consumers' uncertainty and risk, and can enhance believability,  
35 perceptions, attitudes, values and behaviours toward other connected sources (Haig, 2015;  
36 Jain et al., 2022; Kumar et al., 2021). There is limited evidence in the literature on the reverse  
37 effects of brand and corporation on celebrity, especially based on their credibility. Hence,  
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3 considering the importance, this study examines the effects of brand credibility and corporate  
4 credibility on the credibility of celebrity endorsers.  
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8 Furthermore, this study also uses advertising credibility as a mediator and moderator,  
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10 examining its effects on the effect of brand credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity  
11 credibility. Previous researchers (De Pauw et al., 2018; Gong, 2021; Halder et al., 2021; Lee  
12 et al., 2022) have suggested that credible advertising can perform as a major mediator and  
13 moderator between two sources and thus can affect relationships. However, there is little  
14 knowledge on the moderating and mediating effects of advertising credibility on the effect of  
15 brand credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity credibility.  
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24 Taking the theory into consideration, this study uses associative network theory to  
25 examine the reverse effects of brand credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity  
26 credibility, directly and through the moderating and mediating effects of advertising  
27 credibility, in order to (i) examine the effects of both credibility constructs on celebrity  
28 credibility; (ii) examine whether advertising credibility has a significant mediating effect on  
29 the effects of both credibility constructs on celebrity credibility; and (iii) examine whether  
30 advertising credibility has a significant moderating effect on the effects of brand credibility  
31 and corporate credibility on celebrity credibility.  
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42 The paper starts with the research background on the topic, before introducing the  
43 conceptual model, then explaining the methodology, next providing the results and  
44 discussion, and finally presenting the conclusions.  
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## 50 **2. Research background**

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52 Celebrity endorsers are defined as individuals who enjoy public recognition and use that  
53 recognition on behalf of goods by appearing with them in advertisements (Chin et al., 2019;  
54 Halder et al., 2021; McCormick, 2016). They are considered in the literature as useful  
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3 marketing tools and serve as self-reference agents by inspiring consumers to adopt their  
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5 behaviour (Biswas et al., 2006; Brown and Tiggermann, 2020). They increase advertisement  
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7 recall rates, break through the media clutter, attract consumers' attention and bring their own  
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9 images and values, which can then be transferred to the brands and corporations through the  
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11 hierarchy of effects model, whereby consumers move from minimal knowledge of a brand  
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13 and corporation to the eventual brand and corporate choice (Charbonneau and Garland, 2009;  
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15 Chin et al., 2019; Ilicic and Webster, 2011; McCormick, 2016).  
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19 The multifaceted influence of celebrity endorsers on consumers' decisions makes this  
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21 an important topic to be researched (Moraes et al., 2019). Some studies ((El Hedhli et al.,  
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23 2021; Halder et al., 2021) have examined the impacts of celebrity endorsement on attitudes  
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25 towards the brand, corporation and purchase intention. In recent years, researchers (El Hedhli  
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27 et al., 2021; Erdogan, 2001; Moraes et al., 2019) have called for studies that focus on topics  
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29 other than attitudinal and behavioural constructs. The increases in the fame of celebrity  
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31 endorsers have opened new arenas of research. Topics such as examining celebrity endorsers'  
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33 effects on constructs like brand recall, brand recognition, brand credibility, brand equity,  
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35 brand love, corporate image, corporate credibility, etc. have emerged (Chin et al., 2019; Spry  
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37 et al., 2011; Teng et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020).  
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42 Anecdotal evidence suggests the existence of a reverse effect, whereby the elegance  
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44 or professional success of a brand or corporation can be transferred to a celebrity endorser  
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46 (Charbonneau and Garland, 2009; Seno and Lukas, 2007; Thomas and Fowler, 2016). Both  
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48 brands and celebrity endorsers are nodes and are connected through associative links, such  
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50 that when consumers think of a celebrity endorser, the brand and corporation come into their  
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52 minds, and when they think of a brand and corporation, the related celebrity endorser comes  
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54 into their minds (Hussain et al., 2023a, b). Taking this into consideration, some previous  
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56 researchers (Doss, 2011; Seno and Lukas, 2007; Thomas and Fowler, 2016) have examined  
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3 the reverse effect of brands and corporations on celebrity endorsers. Seno and Lukas (2007),  
4 in a conceptual paper, hypothesised that brand image and corporate image were positively  
5 related to celebrity image and indirectly related to celebrity equity. Doss (2011), using a  
6 quantitative method, i.e. ANOVA, studied the effects of attitude towards the brand on each of  
7 the dimensions of celebrity credibility. The results suggested a moderating effect of attitude  
8 towards the brand on celebrity credibility. Similarly, Charbonneau and Garland (2010)  
9 collected data from New Zealand undergraduate students and studied the reverse effects of  
10 corporate image and brand image on celebrity image. They used simple statistical methods  
11 and found that the potential for reverse image transfer was real, and that brands and  
12 corporations had a positive effect on celebrities.  
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26 A few studies (Thomas and Fowler, 2016; Till, 2000; White et al., 2009) have also  
27 been conducted exploring the negative effect of brands on celebrity endorsers. Till (2000)  
28 demonstrated how a celebrity endorser's own image could be affected by associations with  
29 negatively associated brands and corporations. White et al. (2009) used cognitive social  
30 transference theory to examine the effect of negative product information on consumers'  
31 perceptions towards the celebrity endorser in a laboratory experiment. They collected data  
32 from students and found that consumers who saw negative news stories on the advertised  
33 product showed less favourable perceptions towards the celebrity than those who did not  
34 view the negative news. In addition, Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta (2010) and Thomas and  
35 Fowler (2016) examined the effects of brand transgression on consumers' attitudes towards  
36 celebrity endorsers. The results using ANOVA suggested that brand transgression negatively  
37 impacted attitudes towards celebrity endorsers. In recent years, Johnson et al. (2022)  
38 examined the effect of brand transgressions on a celebrity endorser's endorsement portfolio  
39 and bystander brands based on a quantitative ANOVA method. They found that negative  
40 brand publicity only impacted the brand's moral reputation.  
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These studies show that most researchers (e.g. Charbonneau and Garland, 2010; Johnson et al., 2022; Seno and Lukas, 2007) have tended to focus on the effects of brands and corporations based on their image or attitudes, while little is known about the reverse effects of brand and corporate credibility on the credibility of celebrity endorsers. These credibility constructs, i.e. brand credibility and corporate credibility, are the two most important attributes for brand and corporate recognition (AlKasassbh and Salleh, 2016; Hussain, 2021). They represent the cumulative effect of all the current and past marketing strategies used by the firm and increase believability regarding the brand and the corporation's position (Erdem and Swait, 2004; Erdem et al., 2002). Previous research (Karanges et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020) suggests that, although marketers can use numerous other marketing mix tools to signal credibility, such as distributing products through high-end channels, providing warranties, charging higher prices, sending positive images, etc., these signals may or may not be credible. Signals sent through credible brands and corporations are recognised as long-term and continuing investments, which can increase consumers' evaluation, choice, consideration, confidence, satisfaction and commitment, while at the same time they can reduce costs, price sensitivity and perceived risk related to the brand and corporation (Karanges et al., 2018; Kemp and Bui, 2011; Kharouf et al., 2020).

As celebrities are directly linked to endorsed brands and corporations, they are thought to be more than mere endorsing agents (Moraes et al., 2019; Teng et al., 2020). They are viewed as good friends, pleasant companions and romantic mates (Thomson, 2006). Their well-known personal attributes, their performances and their public or private lives are considered to be important aspects in determining consumers' preference towards endorsed brands and corporations (Carvalho and Azevedo, 2018; Ilicic and Webster, 2011; Kim et al., 2018; Teng et al., 2020; Thomson, 2006). In a similar way, there is a reciprocal process through which the traits of the connected brand are moved to the celebrity endorser (Ilicic

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2  
3 and Webster, 2011). These attributes assist consumers in making judgments about the image  
4 and credibility of the celebrity endorser (Ilicic and Webster, 2011). Although there is some  
5 evidence in the literature, as noted earlier, on the reverse effects of brand image and corporate  
6 image on the celebrity, little is known about the effects of brand credibility and corporate  
7 credibility on celebrity credibility. Hence, the first aim of this study is to examine the direct  
8 effects of brand credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity credibility.  
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17 Along with the effects mentioned above, this study also examines the direct,  
18 mediating and moderating effects of advertising credibility. Advertising credibility is  
19 considered as a crucial element in defining the effectiveness of advertising (Choi and Rifon,  
20 2002). Some researchers (Haghirian and Inoue, 2007; Kim and Han, 2014) have argued that it  
21 positively influences consumers' attitudinal and behavioural constructs towards the celebrity,  
22 brand and corporation. It also increases the believability and credibility of the linked sources,  
23 for example the celebrity, brand and corporation (Hussain et al., 2020b; Kim and Han, 2014;  
24 Wu and Wang, 2011). Although previous researchers have discussed these important effects,  
25 none has examined the effects of advertising credibility on the three credibility constructs, i.e.  
26 celebrity credibility, brand credibility and corporate credibility. Hence, the hypotheses of this  
27 study concern the direct effects of advertising credibility on celebrity credibility, and the  
28 indirect mediating and moderating effects of advertising credibility on the effects of brand  
29 credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity credibility. The mediating effect of  
30 advertising credibility is examined because the previous literature (Anubha and Shome, 2021;  
31 De Pauw et al., 2018; Goldsmith et al., 2000; Sallam and Wahid, 2012) suggests that active  
32 advertising mediates the relationship between the brand, corporation and celebrity. It helps in  
33 critically processing the message on the brand and corporation, and increases consumers'  
34 persuasive behaviours towards the connected sources, such as the endorsing celebrity  
35 (Anubha and Shome, 2021; De Pauw et al., 2018). The mediating effect of advertising on the  
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3 effect of the brand and corporation on the celebrity will be higher when the advertising is  
4 credible (Erdem and Swait, 2004; Kemp and Bui, 2011; Kia, 2016; Wang and Yang, 2010).  
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7 However, little is known about these relationships. Hence, the next objective of the present  
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10 study is to explore the mediating effect of advertising credibility on the effects of brand  
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13 credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity credibility.

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15 Similarly to the above objective, the moderating effect of advertising credibility is  
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17 also examined. This moderating effect is explored because the literature (Anubha and Shome,  
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19 2021) suggests that consumers with a high level of involvement in advertising show higher  
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21 interest than consumers with low involvement. High-involvement consumers tend to  
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23 engender central route processing, which means they use cognitive efforts to evaluate the  
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25 issue-relevant arguments (Dens and Pelsmacker, 2010). In such situations, consumers are  
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27 likely to engage in critical evaluations or highly diagnostic cues, such as the use of different  
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29 attributes or performance to evaluate the advertising (Anubha and Shome, 2021; Dens and  
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31 Pelsmacker, 2010). This is in contrast with low-involvement consumers, who tend to  
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33 engender peripheral route processing, which means they use simple acceptance and rejection  
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35 cues in the evaluation of advertising. Previous studies (Hwang and Hyun, 2015; Kim et al.,  
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37 2020) suggest that consumers' high involvement in the critical evaluation of advertising  
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39 increases their opinion towards linked nodes such as brands, corporations and celebrities. The  
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41 effect of advertising on the connected nodes is higher when the advertising is highly credible  
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43 (Erdem and Swait, 2004; Hussain, 2021; Kia, 2016; Kim et al., 2020). Based on this, one of  
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45 the objectives of this study is to examine the moderating effect of advertising credibility on  
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47 the effects of brand credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity credibility.  
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54 **The conceptual framework used in this study is based on associative network theory,**  
55 **which suggests that human memory is a network consisting of various nodes connected by**  
56 **associative links (Spry et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2020). When one node is primed, it activates**  
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3 all the other associated nodes in consumers' memory through a process of spreading  
4 activation (Dwivedi et al., 2015). Within the context of celebrity endorsement, celebrities,  
5 brands and corporations represent nodes, which 'initially are unconnected but become linked  
6 over time through the endorsement process' (Till and Shimp, 1998, p. 68). Feelings and  
7 meanings associated with celebrity endorsers are expected to transfer to brands and  
8 corporations through recurring associations (Hussain, 2021; Soesilo et al., 2020; Spry et al.,  
9 2011). Previous researchers (Fink et al., 2012; Hussain et al., 2020a) using associative  
10 network theory have examined the effects of celebrity credibility on other nodes. However,  
11 there is some evidence (Charbonneau and Garland, 2009; Hussain, 2021; Johnson et al.,  
12 2022; Thomas and Fowler, 2016) suggesting that the reverse effect can also be possible, i.e.  
13 that both the brand and corporation also affect celebrity endorsers, and that their meanings  
14 can be transferred to the celebrity endorser (Cuomo et al., 2018; Ozer et al., 2021; White et  
15 al., 2009).

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Next, the hypotheses are introduced, using associative network theory as discussed earlier.

<<<Insert Figure 1>>>

### ***2.1 Brand credibility and celebrity credibility***

Celebrity endorsers offer symbolic and inspirational benefits that are essential for the advancement and maintenance of consumers' self-identity (Dwivedi et al., 2015, 2016; Saeed et al., 2022). Consumers engage in long-term relational behaviours with entities directly related to their preferred celebrities so they can gain self-identification benefits. Brands are among the many entities that are connected with celebrities through their endorsements. Consumers buy these brands so they can enhance their own self-identity (Dwivedi et al., 2015, 2016; Nosi et al., 2022). The effect of transference towards brands increases when

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3 consumers perceive that the chosen celebrity is credible (Dwivedi et al., 2015, 2016; Spry et  
4 al., 2011; Takaya, 2019; Teng et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Prior research (Dwivedi et al.,  
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6 2018; Takaya, 2019; Zhang et al., 2020) shows that a high level of celebrity credibility leads  
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8 to higher brand credibility, while a low level of celebrity credibility damages the credibility  
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10 of the brand.  
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14 Similarly to the effect of celebrity endorsers on the brand, consumers may also use the  
15 information associated with the credibility of the brand and transfer it to the celebrity  
16 endorser. Celebrity endorsers benefit equally in the relationship between the celebrity and the  
17 endorsed brand, as both have the potential to transfer effects from one to the other (Ilicic and  
18 Webster, 2013; Johnson et al., 2022). Associative network theory confirms this notion and  
19 illustrates that the human mind is a net of nodes, where every node is connected to others on  
20 the basis of information about a brand and/or celebrity, such that when a celebrity endorser  
21 comes into a consumer's mind, the connected brand also comes into their mind, and when  
22 they think of a brand, the associated celebrity comes into their mind (An et al., 2019; Spry et  
23 al., 2011; Takaya, 2019).  
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27 Based on this theory, a few researchers (An et al., 2019; Doss, 2011; Seno and Lukas,  
28 2007; Wang et al., 2020) have also investigated the reverse effect, i.e. the effect of the brand  
29 on the celebrity. From the conceptual study of Seno and Lukas (2007) to the empirical studies  
30 conducted by Charbonneau and Garland (2010), Doss (2011), Thomas and Fowler (2016) and  
31 Johnson et al. (2022), the findings suggest that the brand has a significant impact on the  
32 celebrity endorser. However, all these studies were centred on the effect of brand image on  
33 celebrity image, and little is known on the effects of brand credibility on celebrity credibility.  
34 Taking the earlier noted importance of credibility, the following hypothesis is therefore  
35 advanced:  
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58 *H1. Brand credibility has a direct positive effect on celebrity credibility.*  
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## 2.2 Corporate credibility and celebrity credibility

The credibility of celebrity endorsers is an important attribute in consumers' evaluations of the effectiveness of a corporation (Kim et al., 2014). A highly credible celebrity as a promotional tool can help a corporation in generating positive customer views towards its social responsibility, investment assurance and marketing ability; and most importantly enhances its credibility by purging all the negative images linked to it (Kim et al., 2014). These assertions are similar to the findings of earlier researchers (Kim et al., 2014; Yoo et al., 2018) who explored the positive effects of celebrity credibility on various corporate attributes. Anecdotal studies (Hussain et al., 2020b; Lafferty et al., 2002) suggest that celebrity credibility can have a beneficial impact on attitudes and behaviours towards a corporation. It can have a positive effect on a corporation's fiscal reporting, performance and material earnings (Ding et al., 2011). The current literature (Hussain et al., 2020b; Kim and Han, 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Yoo et al., 2018) reveals that celebrity credibility can have a significant effect on corporate image, corporate loyalty and, in particular, corporate credibility.

These assertions are consistent with associative network theory, which contends that celebrity credibility can create certain associations in consumers' minds, including that of corporate credibility (Fink et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2020). Based on this theory, the reverse effect of a corporation on a celebrity may also be possible, in that when consumers think of a corporation, all the information stored in their memory regarding the associated celebrity is retrieved (Hussain, 2021; Ricks Jr, 2005). A credible corporation can arouse consumers' emotional perceptions about the celebrity endorser (Kim and Han, 2021; Lai et al., 2010) and can act as a mechanism to send signals to consumers suggesting to them that the celebrity endorser has desirable traits such as being trustworthy, honest and of high credibility (He and Lai, 2014; Kim and Han, 2021). However, there is very little evidence available in the

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3 literature on the effects of corporate credibility on celebrity credibility. Hence, the next  
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5 hypothesis is as follows:  
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8 *H2. Corporate credibility has a positive effect on celebrity credibility.*  
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### 10 11 **2.3 Advertising credibility and celebrity credibility** 12

13 The effect of advertising credibility on celebrity credibility is also examined in this study.  
14 Advertising is a popular but challenging form of marketing communication (Muda et al.,  
15 2014). It plays a substantial role in introducing and strengthening products and services. It  
16 arouses awareness and transfers meanings to brands. Marketers use various techniques to  
17 make advertisements effective at attracting more consumers. Engaging a credible celebrity is  
18 one of the many techniques used to bring attention to the advertisements, and it helps firms to  
19 break through the clutter of competing brands (Chan and Fan, 2021; Charbonneau and  
20 Garland, 2005). This technique contributes to advertisement recall and recognition, increases  
21 commercial rating and creates believability among consumers (Chan and Fan, 2021; Martins  
22 et al., 2019; Singh and Banerjee, 2018).  
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36 Previous studies (Lafferty et al., 2002; Singh and Banerjee, 2018) have found that  
37 celebrity credibility influences advertising effectiveness measures, including attitudes  
38 towards the advertising, advertising image and advertising efficiency. It has also been  
39 suggested that credible celebrities bring credibility towards the advertising and make it more  
40 believable (Hussain et al., 2020b; Muda et al., 2014).  
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48 Based on associative network theory, it can also be suggested that the reverse effect is  
49 also probable, i.e. that a credible advertisement can also have a significant effect on the  
50 celebrity endorser and their credibility (Muda et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2020). Previous  
51 studies (Andreini et al., 2021; Cotte et al., 2005; Wu and Wang, 2011) provide evidence that  
52 advertising is an important factor affecting persuasion effectiveness. It helps in influencing,  
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3 informing and increasing consumers' thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviours towards the  
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5 celebrity endorser (Pang et al., 2009). It enhances the celebrity endorser's equity, prestige and  
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7 image, and, most importantly, affects the credibility of the celebrity endorser (Meenaghan,  
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9 1995). Credible advertising, as a communication tool, can send signals to the celebrity  
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11 endorser and can indicate that celebrity endorser is also credible (Andreini et al., 2021;  
12  
13 Hussain et al., 2020a; Kim et al., 2014; Spry et al., 2011). In sum, if consumers believe that  
14  
15 the advertising has credibility, they will believe the message and, as a result, will accept the  
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17 nodes associated with it (Spry et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2020). Despite the importance of  
18  
19 advertising credibility's effect on celebrity credibility, very little research is found on this  
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21 relationship. Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis is therefore advanced:  
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26 *H3. Advertising credibility has a direct positive effect on celebrity credibility.*  
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#### 29 30 ***2.4 The mediating effect of advertising credibility on the effects of brand credibility and*** 31 ***corporate credibility on celebrity credibility*** 32

33 Substantial research has been carried out on celebrity credibility and its effects on the  
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35 advertising, brand and corporation, i.e. on attitude towards the advertisement, attitude  
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37 towards the brand and attitude towards the corporation (Lafferty et al., 2002; Muda et al.,  
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39 2014). A few researchers (Cho and Rifon, 2002; De Pauw et al., 2018; Goldsmith et al.,  
40  
41 2000) have also moved a step forward and examined the mediating effects of advertising on  
42  
43 the effects of celebrity credibility on brand and corporate credibility. Their results show  
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45 positive mediating effects, which are also in line with the outcomes found from the dual  
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47 mediation hypothesis and confirm that advertising affects the brand and the corporation, both  
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49 directly and indirectly (Goldsmith et al., 2000; Hussain et al., 2021).  
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54 These findings trigger the suggestion that a credible advertisement can also have a  
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56 positive mediating effect on the effect of celebrity credibility on brand credibility and  
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58 corporate credibility. It can be suggested that, since each of the constructs triggers  
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3 consumers' associative links or nodes (Muda et al., 2014), a reverse effect, i.e. the mediating  
4 effect of advertising credibility on the effects of brand credibility and corporate credibility on  
5 celebrity credibility, is also possible. Little is known on these effects, although a few  
6 researchers (Anubha and Shome, 2021; De Pauw et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2022; Sallam  
7 and Wahid, 2012) have explored the mediating effect of advertising credibility on the brand  
8 and corporation, and have suggested that consumers develop an attitude towards advertising,  
9 which leads them to create attitudes towards the brand and corporation, before building a  
10 positive attitude towards the celebrity credibility. This mediating effect towards celebrity  
11 credibility will be higher if the brand, corporation and advertising are credible too (Anubha  
12 and Shome, 2021; Chetioui et al., 2021; De Pauw et al., 2018; Goldsmith et al., 2000; Sallam  
13 and Wahid, 2012). Nonetheless, there is weaker empirical evidence available on this topic.  
14 Based on this discussion, and given the lack of evidence in the literature, the following  
15 hypothesis is advanced:

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33 *H4. Advertising credibility significantly mediates the effects of (a) brand credibility*  
34 *on celebrity credibility and (b) corporate credibility on celebrity credibility.*

### 35 36 37 38 39 ***2.5 The moderating effect of advertising credibility on the effects of brand credibility and*** 40 ***corporate credibility on celebrity credibility***

41  
42 The conceptualisation and measurement of involvement in an advertising message has been a  
43 crucial and controversial subject in the literature (Andrews et al., 1990). This is important due  
44 to the recent advancement of various involvement models in advertising, such as the  
45 elaboration likelihood model, attitude towards the advertising model and integrated  
46 information response model (Andrews et al., 1990). It is also significant in understanding  
47 how consumers with high and low levels of advertising involvement make their decisions,  
48 and what aspects they usually pick in making these decisions (Andrews and Durvasula, 1991;  
49 Hussain et al., 2021; Spielmann and Richard, 2013).

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3           Researchers (Eisend, 2022; Hwang and Hyun, 2015; Spielmann and Richard, 2013)  
4  
5 suggest that consumers, based on their involvement in the advertising message, usually make  
6  
7 decisions differently. Consumers with a high level of advertising involvement depend on  
8  
9 central routes (i.e. a message-based route) to enhance their attitudes and beliefs, while  
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11 consumers with a low level of advertising involvement depend on peripheral cues (i.e. less  
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13 cognitive routes) to enhance their attitudes and beliefs (Eisend, 2022; Laczniak and  
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15 Muehling, 1993; Spielmann and Richard, 2013; Wu and Wang, 2011). Consumers with a  
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17 higher level of advertising involvement increase their attention level and cognitive effort  
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19 during their grasp of advertisements and may go through a process of interpretation in which  
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21 the memorial representation of the information is retrieved from the memory (Eisend, 2022;  
22  
23 Wang, 2006). These consumers typically use central route information processing and are  
24  
25 willing to apply themselves to elaborating on the content of advertising in order to get more  
26  
27 information on the brand and corporation. On the other hand, consumers with low levels of  
28  
29 advertising involvement use peripheral route information processing and have less interest in  
30  
31 the processing of elaborating information (Eisend, 2022; Wu and Wang, 2011). These  
32  
33 consumers are likely to acknowledge the emotional appeal of advertising, extracting  
34  
35 information based on factors such as music, layout and background, rather than taking the  
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37 functional attributes of the brand and corporation into account in their decision-making  
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39 processes (Namin et al., 2020; Wu and Wang, 2011).  
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47           These differences form and change consumers' attitudes and beliefs. However, an  
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49 examination of the previous literature (Eisend, 2022; Laczniak and Muehling, 1993, Namin et  
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51 al., 2020; Wu and Wang, 2011) suggests that the results relating to high and low involvement  
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53 in advertisement messages are mixed. Laczniak and Muehling (1993), Namin et al. (2020)  
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55 and Wang (2006) found that consumers with a high level of involvement were more likely to  
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57 focus on an advertising message, and to have a higher effect regarding attitude towards the  
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3 advertising, belief confidence, advertising confidence, advertising recall and advertising  
4 involvement. However, Gardner (1985) found that beliefs and attitudes toward advertisement  
5 influenced brand attitudes equally in conditions of high and low involvement, while Park and  
6 Young (1986) found that attitude towards advertising was an influence only in low-  
7 involvement conditions.  
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15 Moreover, there is weak knowledge of the moderating effect of advertising credibility  
16 on the persuasion and evaluation of consumers (Celebi, 2007; Haghirian et al., 2005; Zimand-  
17 Sheiner et al., 2020). The limited prior knowledge (Haghirian et al., 2005; Kim and Han,  
18 2014; Zimand-Sheiner et al., 2020) shows that advertising credibility has a positive effect on  
19 consumers' persuasion and evaluation. It directly and positively influences consumers'  
20 willingness to believe in the other connected sources (Haghirian et al., 2007; Okazaki, 2004).  
21 A high level of advertising credibility can significantly influence all the other connected  
22 sources, while a low level of advertising credibility does not affect them (Haghirian et al.,  
23 2005; Zimand-Sheiner et al., 2020). Previous researchers (Anubha and Shome, 2021; Cotte et  
24 al., 2005; Haghirian and Inoue, 2007; Haghirian et al., 2005) have explored the moderating  
25 effect of advertising credibility on attitude towards the advertising, advertising value and  
26 purchase intention. There is little knowledge on the moderating effect of advertising  
27 credibility on the effect of celebrity credibility on the brand and corporation. Earlier studies  
28 (Anubha and Shome, 2021; Celebi, 2007; Haghirian et al., 2005), however, have examined  
29 the moderating effect of celebrity credibility and suggest that it makes it easier for consumers  
30 to believe in the credibility of other connected sources. Based on associative network theory,  
31 it can also be suggested that there is a possibility that advertising credibility has a moderating  
32 effect on the reverse relationship, i.e. the effects of brand credibility and corporate credibility  
33 on celebrity credibility. Therefore, the next hypothesis is:  
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3 *H5. Advertising credibility significantly moderates the effect of (a) brand credibility*  
4 *on celebrity credibility and (b) corporate credibility on celebrity credibility, in that consumers*  
5 *with a higher level of involvement in advertising credibility show a higher effect, while*  
6 *consumers with a low level of involvement in advertising credibility show a lower effect.*  
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### 13 **3. Methodology**

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15 This study used a quantitative method and a survey to collect the data. A quantitative method  
16 was used to examine the (cause-and-effect) relationships between the constructs (Saunders et  
17 al., 2009). To do this, we used a survey, which is beneficial to gather insights, opinions, and  
18 attitudes on each construct used in the study (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Further, the non-  
19 probability convenience sampling method was used for data collection. This method was  
20 chosen as it provides ease and convenience in collecting data. The only disadvantage of using  
21 this method is that some units in the population have a higher chance than others of being  
22 selected. To reduce this problem, care was taken in collecting the data, and attempts were  
23 made to ensure that a representative sample was used.  
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36 Further, 675 questionnaires were distributed and 655 were used in the study, as 20 had  
37 missing data. Several measures were considered in choosing an appropriate sample size,  
38 including missing data, the heterogeneity of the population, multivariate analysis, and the  
39 number of constructs and items (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Hair et al., 2006; Malhotra, 2010).  
40 Moreover, we also considered communalities (i.e. over 0.50) and the usage of SEM  
41 (Malhotra, 2010).  
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50 As the population was heterogeneous, multivariate analysis and SEM were used. Most  
51 prior researchers on the topic have used ANOVA, which measures a specific instance of  
52 regression, and is used only to investigate a single factor and a single dependent variable  
53 (Breitoshu, 2019). SEM is preferable to ANOVA, as it includes observed and latent variables,  
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3 and the relationships between various latent constructs can be examined. Several dependent  
4 variables can be studied in SEM analysis, and equation residuals can be correlated in SEM  
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6 (Elsotouhy et al., 2024; Lei and Wu, 2007). It can also be used to analyse ANOVA and other  
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8 statistical tools.  
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12 A self-structured survey with a seven-point Likert scale to collect data from London  
13 between November 2019 and March 2020. London was chosen because of its prominent  
14 global status as a financial, multicultural and fashion hub (Fashion-Schools, 2016; The  
15 Culture Trip, 2016). The questionnaire was created and sent to participants using both online  
16 and offline methods (such as Google Forum, social media and distribution in community sites  
17 such as libraries, universities, shopping malls, etc.). It was 10 pages long and included 51  
18 questions on five constructs.  
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28 Four examples based on leading international brands, corporations, advertisements  
29 and celebrity endorsers were chosen for this study. They were chosen because of their  
30 popularity, credibility, positive customer perception, familiarity and strong competitive  
31 positions in the market (Chang et al., 2007; Tong and Hawley, 2009; Hussain et al., 2020b;  
32 Spy et al., 2009). To choose the brands, corporations and celebrity endorsers to be used the  
33 survey, the researchers examined various databases (Biographyonline, 2015;  
34 Celebrityendorsementads, 2015; Dimitropoulou, 2021; FHM, 2015; Hussain et al., 2020b;  
35 2023b; Love Money, n.d.; Ranker, 2020; Startup Talky, 2021; TheRichest, 2015; White,  
36 2021) on celebrity endorsers and also asked nearly 30 participants to recommend names that  
37 fitted well with the consumer personality and celebrity personality dimensions (Delgado-  
38 Ballester and Munuera-Aleman, 2001, 2005; Hussain et al., 2023b). We shortlisted several  
39 names and then reduced them to four brands, four corporations and four celebrity endorsers  
40 after contacting 10 researchers in the field to confirm that the names were well-suited to the  
41 topic (Carvalho and Azvedo, 2018; Hussain et al., 2020a, 2023a; b). We used certain criteria,  
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3 i.e., we chose brands with similar names to the corporation to avoid issues with consumer  
4 recognition (Anholt, 2010; Hussain et al., 2023a), we further made sure that the celebrity  
5 endorsers possessed similar features to the brand and corporation, i.e. that they were popular,  
6 credible, well-perceived and highly competitive in the market (Carvalho and Azvedo, 2018;  
7 Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman, 2003; Soh et al., 2009; Zhu et al., 2019). All the  
8 brands covered one industry, i.e. sportswear, and fell within the list of top 10 brands (Statista,  
9 2023). Moreover, we made sure that the chosen celebrity endorsers were still endorsing the  
10 above brands at the time of the data collection. We also confirmed these names with other  
11 researchers in the field (Hussain et al., 2023b).

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The final brands selected were Puma, Adidas, Under Armour and Nike; the corporations were Puma SE, Adidas AG, Under Armour Inc. and Nike Inc.; and the celebrity endorsers were Usain Bolt, Lionel Messi, Dwayne Johnson and Serena Williams. Mostly, previous studies have used fictional examples (Carvalho and Azvedo, 2018; Charbonneau and Garland, 2009; Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta, 2010; Thomas and Fowler, 2016), while the present study is based on real examples of celebrity endorsers, brands, and corporations.

In total, 24.56 per cent of the participants selected Usain Bolt, 26.97 per cent chose Lionel Messi, 22.71 per cent chose Dwayne Johnson and 25.76 per cent chose Serena Williams.

The model was analysed for all the brands and corporations together, because the emphasis was on the model not on the separate brands. Earlier studies on the topic (e.g. Charbonneau and Garland, 2009; Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta, 2010; Hussain et al., 2023a, b; Johnson et al., 2022; Thomas and Fowler, 2016) used a similar approach, i.e. analysing the overall model rather than making justifications on individual brands.

The survey included questions on brand credibility, corporate credibility, advertising credibility, and celebrity credibility. Additional questions on participants' age, gender,

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3 income, education and ethnicity were included. Furthermore, the participants were informed  
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5 of all the relevant information on ethics, such as anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent  
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7 and privacy (Bryman and Bell, 2011). They were provided with the option to withdraw from  
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9 the study at any phase (Bryman and Bell, 2011). They were also given information on the  
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11 purpose of the study and why their participation was important, and were offered small  
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13 incentives such as souvenirs and sweets to increase their motivation to participate.  
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### 18 **3.1 Survey measures**

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20 The items on the four constructs, i.e. celebrity credibility, advertising credibility, brand  
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22 credibility and corporate credibility, were taken from the previous literature (Erdem and  
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24 Swait, 2004; Feathermen et al., 2010; Ohanian, 1991).  
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27 The first of these constructs, celebrity credibility, is defined on the basis of two  
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29 factors: expertise and trustworthiness. Expertise is defined as the extent to which a celebrity  
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31 endorser is perceived to be a source of valid assertions, while trustworthiness is defined as the  
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33 extent to which the celebrity endorser intends to communicate the assertions s/he considers  
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35 most valid (Chin et al., 2019; Erdogan et al., 2001; Ohanian, 1991). Ohanian's (1991) six  
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37 items were used to measure celebrity credibility.  
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40 The second construct, brand credibility, refers to a brand being seen as an honest and  
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42 reliable source with the capability to maintain its promises (An et al., 2019; Hanzae et al.,  
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44 2012). Erdem and Swait's (1998, 2004) seven-item scale was used to measure brand  
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46 credibility.  
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49 The third construct, corporate credibility, refers to a corporation that is caring, ethical,  
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51 honest, reliable and truthful, and that designs and delivers products/services based on the  
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53 needs and wants of consumers (Feathermen et al., 2010; Jahanzeb et al., 2013; Soesilo et al.,  
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2020). Ten items developed by Feathermen et al. (2010) were used to measure corporate credibility in this study.

The fourth construct, advertising credibility, relates to accurate, complete, honest and reliable information (Prendergast and Wong, 2009; Yaakop et al., 2013; Zimand-Sheiner et al., 2020). It means the advertising delivers what it promises and fulfils the claims it makes on products and services (Zimand-Sheiner et al., 2020). It was measured using six items developed by MacKenzie and Lutz (1989). All the items are shown in Table 1.

### 3.2 Analysis

To examine the quality of the data, we conducted various tests. Kolmogorov–Smirnov (K-S) and Shapiro–Wilks tests was performed, and it was found that all the items and constructs as a whole deviated from a comparable normal distribution (Field, 2009). Next, Omnibus K-Squared and Jarque–Bera tests was performed to analyse skewness and kurtosis (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). The results confirmed that the items and constructs had values between -1 and +1, confirming satisfactory criteria for skewness, and a value of zero confirmed normal distribution (Hussain et al., 2023b). We also used univariate and multivariate techniques to check whether there was any inappropriate representation of the population, and it was found that 13 cases had extreme outliers, which were then deleted from the study (Hawkins, 1980). Furthermore, we examined linearity and multicollinearity using Pearson’s correlation and bivariate correlation, respectively. The results of the linearity test confirmed that all the variables were linear with each other, while the results of the bivariate correlation showed that none of the values between the constructs was above the recommended value of 0.90, confirming that no issue of multicollinearity was found (Malhotra, 2010).



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3 Furthermore, we conducted a non-response bias test to assess whether those who  
4 responded varied in any apparent systematic way from non-respondents (Hill et al., 1995, p.  
5 203). This approach consists of comparisons of observations to examine whether there is a  
6 considerable variation between the observations on all the constructs (Whitten et al., 2010). A  
7 Mann–Whitney U-test was carried out to examine non-response bias. The results of the  
8 Mann–Whitney U-test showed no substantial difference between the observations (Malhotra,  
9 2010). Hence, the results suggested that there was no non-response bias issue in this study  
10 (Hair et al., 2006).  
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13  
14 In addition, we conducted a common method bias test based on procedural and  
15 statistical approaches (Hussain et al., 2023b; Khaneja and Hussain, 2023). For the procedural  
16 approach, we followed Roni's (2014) suggested procedure, i.e. the independent variables  
17 were placed after the dependent variables, the predictor and criterion variables' measures  
18 were taken from different sources, participants' anonymity was kept and finally, the items  
19 were unambiguous and simple. To analyse the statistical procedure, Harmon's one-factor test  
20 was conducted, and it was found that no single factor accounted for more than 50 per cent of  
21 the variance, confirming the essential criteria of common method bias (Podsakoff et al.,  
22 2003).  
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26 The final step was to carry out an SEM test, where a two-step systematic approach  
27 was used to analyse the model. The study used both a measurement model and a structural  
28 model (Kline, 1998). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to examine the  
29 measurement model, and SEM was used to examine the structural model. CFA was used to  
30 identify the number of factors required for each construct and to examine the relationship  
31 between the observed variables and latent variables (Hair et al., 2006; Khaneja and Hussain,  
32 2023). On the other hand, structural modelling was used to examine the hypotheses, or, in  
33 other words, the relationships between the constructs (Malhotra, 2010).  
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3 CFA was carried out to measure the dimensionality of the constructs and the validity  
4 of the measures. Reliability using Cronbach's alpha was used at the items level and  
5 composite reliability was used to examine reliability at the constructs level (Hair et al., 2006).  
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7 The results showed that the Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.84 to 0.936, while composite  
8 reliability was between 0.75 to 0.89; both the values were thus adequate (Hair et al., 2006).  
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10 Furthermore, convergent and discriminant validity were carried out. For convergent validity,  
11 average variance extracted (AVE) was used, which exceeded the minimum acceptable value  
12 of 0.50. Discriminant validity revealed that the relationships between the research factors  
13 were smaller than 0.92. Both the results confirmed the conditions of reliability as suggested  
14 by Hair et al. (2006) and Malhotra (2010). The results on means are also provided, which  
15 show that most participants tended to reply 'Somewhat Agree' for each construct and item.  
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17 No significant difference was found between the mean values of each construct and item,  
18 indicating that the replies were also almost the same. All the above values are provided in  
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33 Table 1.

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35 Table 1 also shows that the square root of AVE for each construct is higher than the  
36 correlation between the construct and any other construct.  
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42 Configural and metric invariances were also examined for the moderator, i.e. for the  
43 involvement of advertising credibility. The results showed that the values from the configural  
44 invariance were satisfactory; however, the metric invariance showed substantial differences  
45 between the two models, i.e. the constrained and unconstrained models. Hence, further  
46 analysis using a delta test was carried out. The results showed minor differences between the  
47 models and hence no items were deleted (Khaneja and Hussain, 2023; Vandenberg and  
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Lance, 2000).

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3 Next, nomological validity was carried out on the data through goodness-of-fit  
4 indices. GFI, AGFI, IFI, CFI, NFI, TLI, SRMR and RMSEA were used. The values for GFI,  
5 AGFI, NFI, CFI, IFI, and TLI were over 0.90, while SRMR and RMSEA were lower than  
6 0.08. Based on Hair et al.'s (2006) suggestion, i.e. that CFI, AGFI, IFI, NFI and TLI should  
7 be higher than 0.80, and that RMSEA and SRMR should be lower than 0.08, these values  
8 confirmed that the model was adequate (Khaneja et al., 2024).  
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12 Furthermore, the study was also examined for common method bias. According to  
13 Conway and Lance (2010), when self-reporting measures are obtained from one sample,  
14 concerns arise over general method variances. Common method variance refers to variance  
15 that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the constructs the measures  
16 represent (Chang et al., 2010, p. 178). It happens when variations in responses are caused by  
17 the instrument, rather than the actual predisposition of the respondents that the instrument is  
18 attempting to uncover. In this study, Harman's single-factor test (1967) was used to analyse  
19 it. The results suggested that there was a 40 per cent variance, which was less than 50 per  
20 cent, suggesting there is no issue of common method bias (Podsakoff, 2003).  
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37 Next, the structural model was examined. Regarding model fit, The values for GFI,  
38 AGFI, NFI, CFI, IFI, and TLI were over 0.90, while SRMR and RMSEA were lower than  
39 0.08, confirming the adequacy of the model (Hair et al., 2006; Hussain et al., 2023a; b).  
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44 Finally, we examined the hypotheses, i.e. the causal relationships, both direct and based  
45 on the mediating and moderating effects. As stated earlier, the structural model was used to  
46 examine these relationships. The results are given in the next section.  
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## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Results

Before the results on the hypotheses, we went through the structure of the sample as given in the analysis. To represent a mix of gender, age, and ethnicity, we carefully chose the sample. The sample comprised 44.5 per cent males and 55.5 per cent females. Regarding age, 51.9 per cent were younger consumers and 48.1 per cent were older consumers, the sample having been split into older and younger consumers using a median split (Hussain et al., 2020b). The median value was 35 years old. The group below the median included 340 (i.e. younger) subjects and the group above the median included 315 (i.e. older) subjects. The two groups were classified accordingly as younger and older consumers. Finally, regarding ethnicity, 57.2 per cent were white consumers and 32.8 per cent were BAME consumers.

Regarding the direct hypotheses, H1, which analyses the effect of brand credibility on celebrity credibility ( $\beta = 0.56$ ,  $t = 9.253$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) is statistically supported. H2, which explains the effect of corporate credibility on celebrity credibility ( $\beta = 0.70$ ,  $t = 1.036$ ,  $p = 0.300$ ) is not confirmed. H3, which analyses the effect of advertising credibility on celebrity credibility ( $\beta = 0.50$ ,  $t = 7.113$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) is statistically confirmed. All the results are provided in Table 2 and Figure 2.

<<<Insert Table 2>>>

<<<Insert Figure 2>>>

Table 2 also shows the results regarding the mediating and moderating effects of advertising credibility. The findings significantly confirm the mediating effect of advertising credibility on the effect of brand credibility on celebrity credibility ( $\beta = 0.75$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and on the effect of corporate credibility on celebrity credibility ( $\beta = 0.302$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). H4a and H4b are therefore supported.

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3 In terms of the moderating effects, it is also observed that advertising credibility  
4 significantly moderates the effect of both brand credibility and corporate credibility on  
5 celebrity credibility. H5a and H5b are therefore confirmed ( $\Delta\chi^2/\Delta DF = -2.417$ ,  $p = 0.016$ ,  
6 supported;  $\Delta\chi^2/\Delta DF = -2.338$ ,  $p = 0.019$ , supported). Further analysis based on hypothesis  
7 H5a suggests that a high level of advertising credibility significantly moderates the effect of  
8 brand credibility on celebrity credibility, such that consumers with a higher level of  
9 involvement in advertising credibility show a higher effect ( $\beta = 0.63$ ,  $t = 6.589$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ),  
10 while consumers with a low level of involvement in advertising credibility show a low effect  
11 ( $\beta = 0.12$ ,  $t = 1.112$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Similarly, further analysis based on hypothesis H5b also  
12 suggests that a high level of advertising credibility significantly moderates the effect of  
13 corporate credibility on celebrity credibility, such that consumers with a high level of  
14 involvement in advertising credibility show a higher effect ( $\beta = 0.69$ ,  $t = 7.732$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and  
15 consumers with a low level of involvement in advertising credibility show a low effect ( $\beta =$   
16  $0.27$ ,  $t = 2.891$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

#### 35 36 **4.2 Discussion**

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38 Regarding the support for H1, i.e. the positive effect of brand credibility on celebrity  
39 credibility, the previous literature on similar topics (Spry et al., 2011; Teng et al., 2020;  
40 Zhang et al., 2020) has provided some evidence regarding the effect of brand credibility on  
41 celebrity credibility, suggesting that the positive effect of the brand transferred onto the  
42 celebrity. Similarly, the third hypothesis (H3), i.e. proposing a direct and positive effect of  
43 advertising credibility on celebrity credibility, is also confirmed. This study therefore offers  
44 empirical support to similar theorised relationships, whereby earlier researchers (Fink et al.,  
45 2012; Hussain et al., 2020b; Till, 1998) suggested that one credible source triggered  
46 credibility in the other source. The credibility of one source has the desired effect and in turn,  
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3 improves the credibility of the other source. These findings are a valuable contribution to the  
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5 literature, as there is little knowledge present on these relationships.  
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8           However, the lack of support for H2, which proposes a direct effect of corporate  
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10 credibility on celebrity credibility, is not in line with prior studies (He and Lai, 2014; Kim et  
11  
12 al., 2014), in which previous researchers using somewhat similar constructs confirmed the  
13  
14 effect of corporate credibility on celebrity credibility. This result could be due to the fact that  
15  
16 consumers are not usually aware of brands linked to corporations. One example is Unilever,  
17  
18 which has more than 400 brands, and consumers are usually not aware of the parent  
19  
20 company. This may cause a recognition problem for consumers and could contribute to  
21  
22 reducing the effect of corporate credibility on celebrity credibility. Secondly, consumers care  
23  
24 more about the brand than they do about the corporation, because the corporation is not the  
25  
26 direct face presented to the consumers, as brands are (Liao and Wang, 2009; Siu et al., 2016).  
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28 Moreover, as celebrities are brands, their relations with brands are dual relationships, making  
29  
30 brand-related information easier to process than information on corporations (Hussain et al.,  
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32 2023a; Lafferty et al., 2002).  
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37           Furthermore, the confirmation of H4a and H4b, indicating that advertising credibility  
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39 mediates the effect of brand credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity credibility, is a  
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41 valuable contribution to the current literature, where little is known on the mediating role of  
42  
43 advertising credibility in the effects of brand credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity  
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45 credibility.  
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49           Finally, the support for H5a and H5b establishes that consumers with a higher level of  
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51 involvement in advertising credibility show a higher effect towards the effect of (a) brand  
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53 credibility and (b) corporate credibility on celebrity credibility than consumers with a low  
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55 level of involvement in advertising credibility.  
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3 These findings also broaden the theoretical domain of associative network theory by  
4 examining the effects of brand credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity credibility,  
5 both directly and through the mediating and moderating effects of advertising credibility.  
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7 Overall, the outcomes, such as the direct effect of brand credibility and corporate credibility  
8 on celebrity credibility, and the mediating and moderating effects of advertising credibility on  
9 the effects of brand credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity credibility, support the  
10 notion that an associative link is forged between the constructs, such that each affects the  
11 other. These findings are in line with previous researchers like Dwivedi et al. (2015), Hussain  
12 et al. (2020b), Phua et al. (2018) and Till (1998), who found the positive effect of similar  
13 constructs on each other.  
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### 26 27 **4.3 Implications**

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29 This study makes a number of theoretical and managerial contributions.  
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#### 32 33 *4.3.1 Theoretical implications*

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35 Regarding theoretical implications, this study minimises a gap in knowledge in two ways.  
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37 Firstly, it examines the effects of credible brands and corporations on the credibility of  
38 celebrity endorsers. Although previous researchers (Charbonneau and Garland, 2009;  
39 Johnson et al., 2022; Yoo et al., 2018) confirmed reverse effects based on image or equity,  
40 there was limited evidence on the effect of credibility. As suggested earlier, credibility plays  
41 a significant role in reducing consumers' uncertainties and risks, while enhancing  
42 perceptions, values, attitudes, and behaviours towards a credible source (Haig, 2015; Jain et  
43 al., 2022). It can also play a vital role in enhancing the credibility of associated elements  
44 (Hussain, 2021).  
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55 Secondly, this study examines the mediating and moderating effects of advertising  
56 credibility on the effect of credible brands and corporations on the credibility of the celebrity  
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3 endorser. It is evident that advertising plays a major role in increasing awareness and  
4 attitudes towards celebrities, brands and corporations (Anubha and Shome, 2021; Soesilo et  
5 al., 2020). However, there was limited knowledge on whether credible advertising could  
6 enhance the credibility of a celebrity, including whether it could mediate and moderate the  
7 effects of brand credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity credibility (Halder et al.,  
8 2021; Hussain et al., 2020a). This study has developed a conceptual model examining the  
9 reverse effects of brand credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity credibility, both  
10 directly and through the mediating and moderating effects of advertising credibility.  
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22 Furthermore, to examine the model, associative network theory is used, which suggests  
23 that human minds comprise nodes connected through associative links, such that when  
24 consumers think of the celebrity, the brand and corporation come into their mind, and when  
25 they think of the brand and corporation, the opposite happens (Spry et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2020).  
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31 These findings also help future researchers to understand the importance of the overall  
32 topic, i.e. the effects of credible brands and corporations on the credibility of celebrities, and  
33 the moderating and mediating effects of advertising credibility on the above relationships.  
34 Furthermore, potential researchers would also be able to understand the reverse relationship  
35 based on associative network theory.  
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#### 43 *4.3.2 Managerial implications*

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45 This study has several implications for marketing managers, specifically in branding  
46 and advertising contexts. Firstly, the findings will help managers to recognise the direct  
47 transference effects of brand credibility and corporate celebrity onto celebrity credibility, i.e.  
48 to understand that it is not only the case that credible celebrities can help in increasing the  
49 credibility of the brand and corporation but a reverse effect of the brand and corporation on  
50 the celebrity is also possible (Kim et al., 2014; Spry et al., 2011). These findings will help  
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3 managers to understand that this transfer of credibility to celebrity endorsers could also  
4 enhance the performance of other associated elements, such as image, equity and extension of  
5 the same brand, corporation and advertising. This will help them to choose endorsers whose  
6 previous associations with brands and corporations are credible, including having a reputation  
7 within society, so the credibility effects can be transferred to the potential sources  
8 (Agustiansyah and Mardhiyah, 2020). Managers will also be able to understand that hiring  
9 credible celebrity endorsers who are/were associated with earlier credible brands and  
10 corporations would give consumers a twofold guarantee, i.e. the celebrities are not only  
11 credible, but also are/were associated with earlier credible brands and corporations (Dwivedi  
12 et al., 2015; Hussain et al., 2023a; Ilicic and Webster, 2015; Mishra and Mishra, 2014; Um  
13 and Kim, 2016). This will also enhance the credibility of the advertising and result in  
14 satisfactory outcomes, such as enhancing credibility, enhancing customers' perceptions and  
15 increasing their attitudes and behaviours towards the associated brands and corporations.  
16 While the effect of celebrity endorsers on brands and corporations or of brands and  
17 corporations on celebrity endorsers does not happen immediately, a credible association  
18 among these factors would shorten the time.

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40 Secondly, the findings help managers to recognise the transference effects of brand  
41 credibility and corporate credibility towards celebrity credibility through the mediating and  
42 moderating effect of advertising credibility (Goldsmith et al., 2000; Hussain et al., 2020a). It  
43 is evident from previous studies that advertising has a positive role in changing consumers'  
44 attitudes towards brands and corporations (Lafferty et al., 2002; Raza et al., 2020; Soesilo et  
45 al., 2020). The findings of this study make a clear contribution to helping managers to  
46 understand the role of credible advertising, including its moderating and mediating effects on  
47 the effects of brand credibility and corporate credibility on celebrity credibility. Managers  
48 will be able to launch credible advertising, so the liking of the brand and corporation can be  
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3 increased, and its effects can be passed to the celebrity endorser (Cuomo et al., 2019; Um,  
4 2022). As stated earlier, a credible celebrity, based on the significant effects of a credible  
5 brand and corporation, can have reverse effects that improve performance, such as awareness,  
6 image and equity of the same brand, corporation and advertising. The findings also help  
7 managers to choose endorsers whose previous associations with brands, corporations and  
8 advertising are credible, so the credibility effects can easily be transferred to the potential  
9 elements.

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11 Both these suggestions could also help to improve economic and commercial  
12 performance. Managers would be able to enhance the credibility of their endorsed brand and  
13 corporation, so the credibility of the celebrity can be enhanced, which would also reinforce  
14 the credibility of the earlier stated sources (Dwivedi et al., 2015; Hussain et al., 2023a; Ilicic  
15 and Webster, 2015). This means that a credible brand, corporation and celebrity would work  
16 hand-in-hand to attract more customers, influence their attitudes and enhance their  
17 investments in the brand and corporation. Furthermore, credible brands, corporations and  
18 celebrity endorsers would help in reducing resources on other marketing mix strategies, such  
19 as advertising, promotions, etc. (Liu et al., 2020; Shrivastava et al., 2021) Commercially,  
20 managers would be able to hire credible celebrity endorsers who could easily liaise with the  
21 credibility of their own brands and corporations. Once again, this would enhance the  
22 profitability and success of brands and corporations.

#### 23 ***4.4 Future study and limitations***

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25 This study has a few limitations, providing guidance for future research. Firstly, a future  
26 study should be carried out to enhance the generalisability and validity of the findings. It  
27 could be suggested that research on this topic in other contexts could produce different results  
28 (Jain et al., 2019). Secondly, a future study could apply a probability sampling technique,  
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3 since, due to the limitations of resources and time, this study collected data using the  
4 convenience sampling technique. Thirdly, a future study could examine the model based on  
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6 convenience sampling technique. Thirdly, a future study could examine the model based on  
7 qualitative or mixed methods, and could establish how different methods affect the results.  
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9 Fourthly, a future study could use an experimental method.  
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12 Fifthly, future research could introduce different boundary conditions for the brands,  
13 corporations, advertisements, and celebrities, since this study includes only highly credible  
14 brands, corporations, advertisements and celebrity endorsers. In this regard, a future study  
15 could differentiate between high- and low-credibility brands, corporations, advertisements  
16 and celebrity endorsers, and could examine their differences to address this limitation; and  
17 could furthermore examine the topic based on different kinds of brands (utilitarian and  
18 hedonistic), corporations (small, medium and large), advertisements (humour and guilt) and  
19 celebrity endorsers (sports stars, athletes and executives). Sixthly, a future study could  
20 explore how consumers of different products, such as fast-moving consumer goods and  
21 luxury brands, are affected. Finally, a future study could compare the effects when firms and  
22 their brands have similar names with when firms and their brands have different names.  
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37 Another limitation is that the brands, corporations, advertisements and celebrity  
38 endorsers examined in this study are all from Western countries. A future study could  
39 minimise this limitation by using different types of celebrity endorsers, such as national, local  
40 and international, and could perform a comparative study. Researchers could also examine  
41 the topic on the basis of various consumers' demographics (age, gender, ethnicity, etc.),  
42 psychographic factors (lifestyle), etc., and could investigate whether these factors affect the  
43 model differently. Finally, a future study could also examine the topic based on consumers'  
44 various involvement levels and could verify whether consumers' higher versus moderate  
45 versus low levels of involvement have any effect on the outcomes.  
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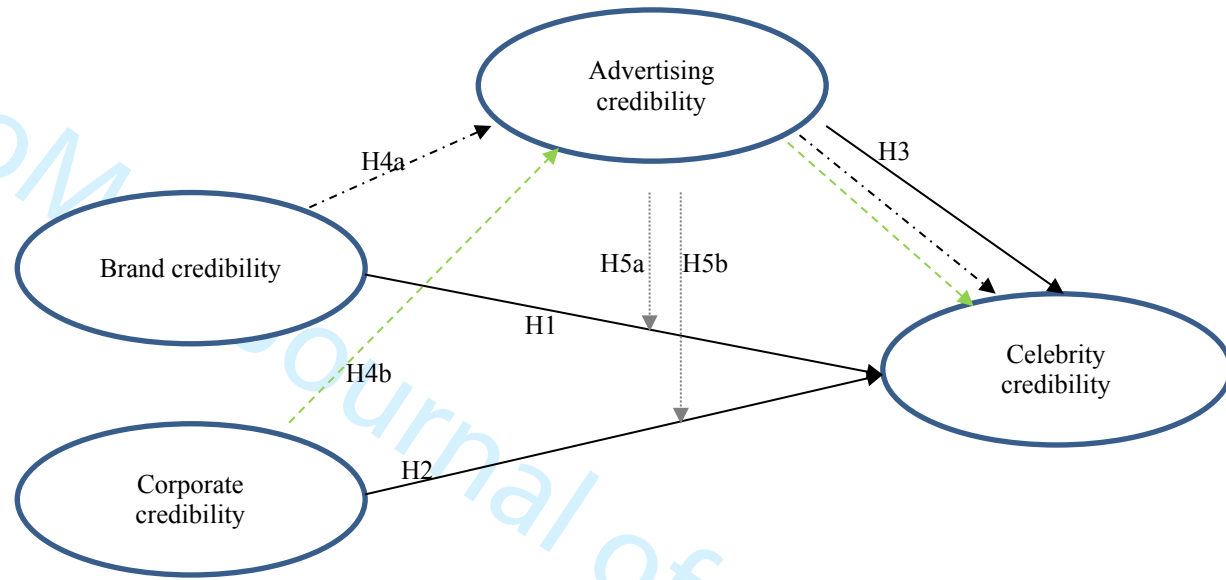
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Figure 1. Conceptual model



H4 (a and b): Mediating effects

H5 (a and b): Moderating effects

Table 1. Construct Items, Factor Loading, Cronbach’s Alpha, Composite Reliability and AVE

Construct	Means	Factor loading	Cronbach’s alpha	Composite reliability	AVE	Source
Celebrity credibility	5.36		0.875	0.814	0.503	Ohanian (1991)
Celebrity is honest	5.29	0.727				
Celebrity is trustworthy	5.36	0.744				
Celebrity is good looking	5.24	0.757				
Celebrity is attractive	5.21	0.782				
Celebrity is an expert	5.60	0.770				
Celebrity is knowledgeable	5.45	0.774				
Advertising credibility	5.43		0.895	0.79	0.564	Mackenzie and Lutz (1989)

Advertising is believable	5.44	0.781				
Advertising is credible	5.47	0.811				
Advertising is trustworthy	5.51	0.731				
Advertising is dependable	5.53	0.811				
Advertising is reliable	5.38	0.722				
Advertising is reputable	5.27	0.721				
Brand credibility	5.5		0.936	0.874	0.589	Erdem and Swait (1998; 2004)
The brands reminds me of someone who's	5.61	0.700				

competent and knows what s/he is doing						
The brand has the ability to deliver what it promises	5.67	0.739				
The brand deliver what it promises	5.72	0.774				
The brand's product claims are believable	5.61	0.724				
Overtime, my experience with this brand have led me to expect it to keep promises, no more and no less	5.66	0.754				

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The brand has a name you can trust	5.43	0.775				
The brand does not pretend to be something it isn't	5.41	0.751				
The brand has quality	5.59	0.753				
Corporate credibility	5.43		0.936	0.876	0.671	Feathermen <i>et al.</i> (2010)
The corporation is dependable	5.45	0.771				
The corporation is honest	5.43	0.811				
The corporations is reliable	5.41	0.780				
The corporation is sincere	5.36	0.813				

The corporation is trustworthy	5.38	0.705				
The corporation has experience	5.35	0.778				
The corporation is knowledgeable	5.43	0.818				
The corporation is expert	5.47	0.776				
The corporation is skilled	5.60	0.712				
The corporation is qualified	5.39	0.744				

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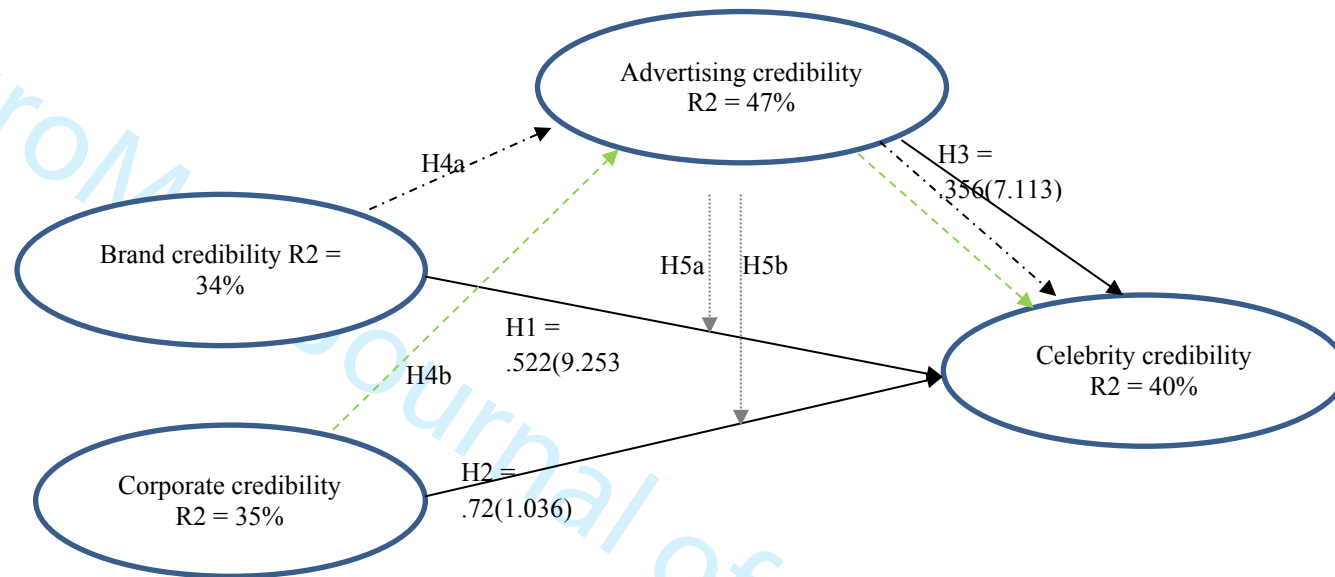


**Table 3. Hypotheses**

Hypotheses				Estimate	SE	CR	P	Results
H1	Brand credibility	...>	Celebrity credibility	.522	.056	9.253	***	Supported
H2	Corporate credibility	...>	Celebrity credibility	.072	.070	1.036	.300	Not supported
H3	Advertising credibility	...>	Celebrity credibility	.356	.049	7.113	***	Supported
Mediation effect (Advertising credibility)								
Hypotheses				Estimate	Lower	Upper	P	Results
H4a	Brand credibility	...>	Advertising credibility ...> Celebrity credibility	.075	.119	.037	.001	Supported
H4b	Corporate credibility	...>	Advertising credibility ...> Celebrity credibility	.302	.277	.390	.001	Supported

Moderation effect (Advertising credibility)										
Hypotheses					$\Delta df$	$\Delta \chi^2$	P	Results		
H5a	Brand credibility	...>	Advertising credibility	...>	Celebrity credibility	1	-2.417	.016	Supported	
H5b	Corporate credibility	...>	Advertising credibility	...>	Celebrity credibility	1	-2.338	.019	Supported	

Figure 2. Conceptual model direct hypotheses results



H4 (a and b): Mediating effects

H5 (a and b): Moderating effects