"Social Media Influencers or Celebrities: Role of Social Identification in Promoting Green Purchase Intentions"

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the impact of endorser familiarity on green purchase intentions, exploring how different types of endorsers—celebrities and social media influencers—affect consumer behavior through the lenses of perceived similarity and wishful identification. Addressing a significant gap in existing research, particularly within the Pakistani context, this study employs a quantitative methodology to gather data from urban millennials and Generation Z consumers. Results indicate a strong direct relationship between endorser familiarity and green purchase intentions, mediated by perceived similarity and wishful identification, especially pronounced with social media influencers. The overall findings of this research indicate that endorser familiarity plays a significant role in enhancing green purchase intentions. This relationship is particularly strong when endorsers are familiar figures. Furthermore, the study reveals that perceived similarity and wishful identification significantly mediate the relationship between endorser familiarity and green purchase intentions, with these mediating effects being more pronounced for social media influencers compared to traditional celebrities. This research highlights the nuanced dynamics of endorser effectiveness in green marketing and underscores the growing importance of choosing the right type of endorser to enhance consumer engagement with sustainable products.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the last few decades, there has been a notable surge in the inclination of environmentally conscious consumers towards favoring green products over mainstream alternatives (Wilson, 2021). A Deloitte report from 2023 highlights that 32% of consumers are highly engaged in adopting a more sustainable lifestyle, with a significant majority expressing preferences for brands that prioritize sustainability, such as reduced packaging, providing information on recycling, and sourcing sustainable products (Deloitte, 2023). Furthermore, consumer behavior reflects a rising eco-consciousness, with majority of Gen Z consumers willing to spend more on sustainable products (Pratt, 2023).

When assessing consumer awareness of product sustainability across various categories, it becomes apparent that many brands encounter difficulties in effectively reaching their target audience (GlobeScan, 2023). One of the most effective ways that has consistently been used by brands successfully to cut through the noise in green marketing is celebrity endorsements (Blasche & Ketelaar, 2015). The concept of utilizing celebrities to sway consumers' decision-making is not a novel one. Such people possess a substantial influence on the attitudes and actions of consumers typically through word-of-mouth communication, due to their elevated standing, social status, likability, or expertise (Vrontis et al., 2020). Celebrity endorsement of marketing messages through the use of Hollywood personalities and movie stars has been a tried-and-true marketing tactic for many years. Since the late 19th century, celebrities have appeared in commercial -; a widely employed marketing tactic that attracted a lot of scholarly and practical attention. (Erdogan, 1999).

The average TV viewership, however, is on a decline (Gallup, 2021) and the accessibility and desirability of influencer endorsements have risen with the development of social media. Companies are increasingly shifting away from using traditional celebrity endorsers in their marketing efforts and instead turning towards social media influencers such as vloggers and bloggers with a great following on Instagram (Koay et al., 2022). Content created by influencers is found to be as effective, if not more so, than advertisements from brands or celebrities (Schouten et al., 2020). Furthermore, influencer persuasiveness extends beyond human influencers, with artificial intelligence influencers also proving to be effective (Kim et al., 2024; Rosengren & Campbell, 2021). In general, people tend to find social media influencers more relatable, have more trust in them, and purchase products recommended by influencers more often than those by celebrities (Schouten et al., 2020). Since influencers appear to be more alike to regular individuals than celebrities, their relatability facilitate perceived similarity and aspirational identification with them, since it is more plausible for people to envision themselves becoming like them (Schouten et al., 2020).

Recent data shows that almost half the Millennials have faith in product endorsements made by influencers, as opposed to less than half (38%) for celebrity-endorsed products. In addition, within the past three months, one-third of Gen Z individuals purchased based on an influencer's reference (Rodrigue, 2023). Such extensive popularity of influencers among consumers has pushed a dramatic shift in the marketing environment as well. Influencers on social media who have amassed sizable fan bases on platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok have become important figures in shaping consumers' opinions and decisions to buy. Most marketers nowadays believe that social media is the best platform for influencer marketing (Geyser, 2020).

Given this dynamic, it becomes crucial to explore how the influence of SMIs compares to traditional celebrity endorsements, especially in the context of driving green purchase

intentions. The concept of purchase intention holds immense importance for marketers as it directly impacts customer acquisitions, purchases, and ultimately, the long-term success of a brand (Koay et al., 2022). It has long been known that celebrity endorsement is a successful marketing tactic for increasing purchase intentions (Atkin & Block, 1983; Erdogan, 1999). But given the popularity of influencer marketing, more exploration is required to determine how well social media influencers and traditional superstars work to encourage green purchase intentions (Jiang et al., 2024; Yadav et al., 2024).

1.2 Aims of the study

This thesis seeks to investigate the effects of endorser familiarity on green purchase intentions. It seeks to examine the moderating impact of endorser type and the mediating role of social identity (perceived similarity and wishful identification) in endorsement that contribute to green purchase intention among consumers. This study will shed light on how consumers perceive and act in regard to green purchase intention and the relative efficacy of these two endorsement types.

1.3 Problem Statement and Research Gap

Social media marketing practices are getting increasing recognition in Pakistan and there is a surge in advertising through social media influencers (Azhar et al., 2022). As consumer preferences increasingly lean towards eco-friendly products, particularly among younger demographics (Pratt, 2023), there is a critical need to evaluate how identification with social media influencers influence these green purchase decisions compared to traditional celebrities.

The role of endorser familiarity in influencing purchase intentions is well-documented (Copeland et al., 2021; Ona & Ona, 2024; Schouten et al., 2020; Supriyanto et al., 2023). However, its specific influence on green purchase intentions remains underexplored,

particularly in the context of social identification. Studies like those conducted by Kapoor et al. (2021) and Schouten et al. (2020) have looked at the overall effects of influencer marketing and celebrity endorsements; but the nuanced relationship between endorser familiarity and green purchase intentions with an emphasis on different types of endorsers has not been thoroughly investigated. This gap is especially pronounced in the mediation of social identification—comprising perceived similarity and wishful identification—between endorser familiarity and green purchase intentions and how these relationships might vary when moderated by the type of endorsement, namely social media influencers versus traditional celebrities (Farivar & Wang, 2022; Yadav et al., 2024). Understanding these dynamics is crucial as they can significantly influence the effectiveness of marketing strategies aimed at promoting green products.

Cultural factors can significantly influence the manifestation of human feelings and behaviors, and therefore, the generalization of specific theories may be limited (Hofstede, 1984). While global studies provide insights into consumer behavior towards endorsements, the unique cultural and market-specific factors in Pakistan necessitate localized research (Ashraf et al., 2023; Khan & Zaman, 2021). The need for a focused study on how various endorsement strategies impact green purchase intentions in this region is highlighted by the dynamic nature of the digital ecosystem and the increasing significance of social media in purchasing decisions in developing countries such as Pakistan (Koay et al., 2022; Sohail et al., 2020). This study examines the effectiveness of celebrity and influencer endorsements in the context of green marketing in an effort to close these disparities. For businesses looking to optimize their marketing strategies in the Pakistani market, the findings will be instructive.

1.4 Research Questions

The main goal of this study was to Investigate the relative effects of traditional and social media influencer marketing on consumers' intentions to make green purchases. The following are the specific research questions, taking into account the knowledge gaps:

RQ1: What is the effect of endorser familiarity on green purchase intentions?

RQ2a: What is the effect of endorser familiarity on perceived similarity?

RQ2b: Does perceived similarity mediate the relationship between endorser familiarity and green purchase intentions?

RQ3a: What is the effect of endorser familiarity on wishful identification?

RQ3b: Does wishful identification mediate the relationship between endorser familiarity and green purchase intentions?

RQ4: Is the effect of endorser familiarity on perceived similarity moderated by endorsement type, such that social media influencer marketing leads to greater perceived similarity than celebrity endorsement?

RQ5: Is the effect of endorser familiarity on wishful identification moderated by endorsement type, such that social media influencer marketing leads to greater wishful identification than celebrity endorsement?

1.5 Research Objectives

The following list of specific research goals for this study takes into account its overall goal and research questions:

i.   To understand the impact of endorser familiarity on green purchase intentions.

ii. To explore the impact of endorser familiarity on perceived similarity.

iii. To find if perceived similarity mediates the relationship between endorser familiarity and green purchase intentions.

iv. To explore the effect of endorser familiarity on wishful identification.

v. To find if wishful identification mediates the relationship between endorser familiarity and green purchase intention.

vi. To identify if the effect of endorser familiarity on perceived similarity is moderated by endorsement type, such that social media influencer marketing leads to greater perceived similarity than celebrity endorsement.

vii. To identify if the effect of endorser familiarity on wishful identification is moderated by endorsement type, such that social media influencer marketing leads to greater wishful identification than celebrity endorsement.

1.6 Results of the Study

The results of the study reveal that endorser familiarity has a positive impact on green purchase intentions. Perceived similarity and wishful identification significantly mediate the relationship between endorser familiarity and green purchase intentions when the endorsement type is considered. The findings emphasize that the type of endorsement (social media influencer and celebrity endorsement) significantly moderates the effectiveness of perceived similarity and wishful identification, with stronger results observed for social media influencer.

1.7 Research Contributions

In particular, through the mediation of social identity and the moderation by endorsement type in the Pakistani market, this thesis provides substantial contributions to the fields of marketing and consumer behavior by examining the influence of endorser familiarity on green buy intentions. It provides a comprehensive understanding of how social media influencers, compared to traditional celebrities, affect consumer decisions regarding environmentally friendly products. This work is among the first in the area to look into these

processes objectively, adding to the global discourse on green marketing strategies and the specific cultural nuances of Pakistani consumers. By examining the nuanced relationship between endorser familiarity, perceived similarity, wishful identification, and green purchase intentions, this research provides valuable insights that could help marketers optimize their strategies to better target the growing segment of eco-conscious consumers. This study not only fills in a significant gap in the research, but it also provides useful advice for companies hoping to successfully use celebrity endorsement in green campaigns

1.8 Research Model
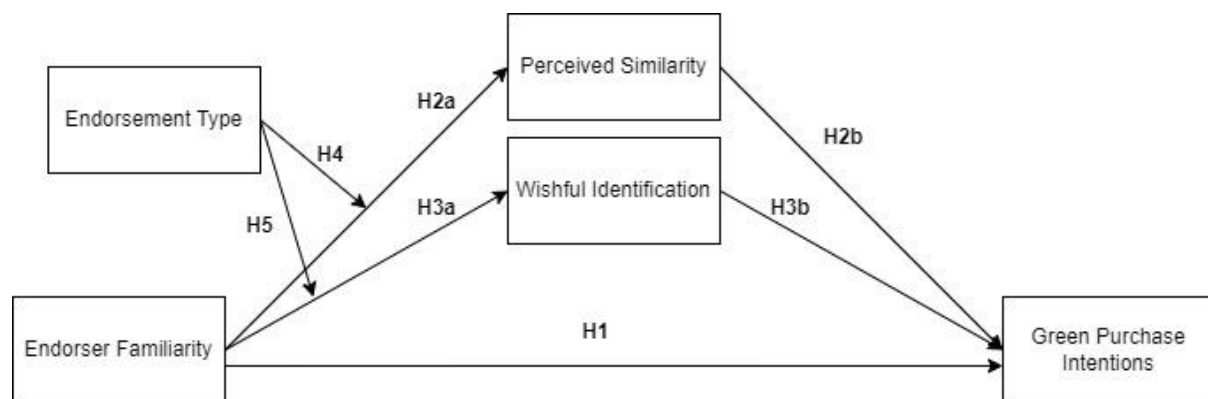
The substantial literature review described in chapter 2 is taken into consideration as the research model is created. Endorsement familiarity is the independent variable while green purchase intentions is the dependent variable. Perceived similarity and wishful identification serve as mediating variables while endorsement type is the moderating variable.

This research model has been an integration of Social Identification Theory or Identification theory, developed by Henri Tajfel (1978).

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter sets the stage for the thesis by outlining the increasing shift among consumers towards green products, influenced by a heightened environmental consciousness globally and particularly in Pakistan. It discusses the growing trend of adopting sustainable lifestyles and the corresponding strategic shifts in businesses towards sustainable practices. The introduction highlights the challenges posed by climate change, particularly in Pakistan, emphasizing the urgent need for effective green marketing strategies. Influencer marketing on social media and the role of celebrities in endorsing products are discussed in relation to how consumers feel about green products.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review delves into the theoretical underpinnings and previous studies related to endorser familiarity, social identification, and their effects on green purchase intentions. It covers different aspects of marketing influences, including the impact of traditional celebrity endorsements versus social media influencers, and how these factors have been studied within various consumer markets, particularly in green marketing. This chapter synthesizes existing research findings, identifying gaps particularly in the context of the Pakistani market and providing a detailed backdrop against which the current study is positioned.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology employed to investigate the influence of endorser familiarity on green purchase intentions, with a focus on the moderating role of endorser type and the mediating role of social identity elements like perceived similarity and wishful identification. It outlines the quantitative research approach, sampling methods, data collection techniques, and the analytical strategies employed, including the use of statistical tools to analyze the data gathered from Pakistani consumers.

Chapter 4: Results

Here, the findings from the empirical investigation are presented. This chapter details the outcomes of the statistical analyses, providing insights into the direct and indirect effects of endorser familiarity on green purchase intentions. It also examines how different types of endorsers (celebrities vs. social media influencers) affect these relationships and discusses the role of social identification processes in mediating these effects.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The final chapter discusses the implications of the findings in light of the theoretical frameworks and previous research discussed in the Literature Review. It interprets the results in terms of their practical implications for marketers, particularly those operating in Pakistan, looking to leverage celebrity and influencer endorsements to promote green products. Limitations of the current study are acknowledged, and recommendations for future research are provided. This chapter concludes by summarizing the key contributions of the thesis to the field of green marketing and endorser effectiveness research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This thesis's literature review chapter explores the corpus of research on the celebrity endorsement and social media influencer marketing in terms of their familiarity and influence on green purchase intention. Although influencer marketing has become increasingly popular in recent times, there is still a lack of research comparing the efficacy of social media influencers and traditional celebrities in influencing customer behavior and forming buying intentions for green products, particularly within the context of social identification.

This chapter seeks to offer a comprehensive understanding of the topic with the help of a thorough review of theoretical frameworks and past researches. It critically examines the theories and concepts surrounding celebrity endorsement, influencer marketing, and green purchase intention, with the mediating role of perceived similarity and wishful identification. Additionally, it looks at contextual elements that can affect how successful certain marketing techniques are in Pakistan's particular setting.

2.2 Theoretical Model

The research model includes six major constructs: endorser familiarity, celebrity endorsement, social media influencer marketing, green purchase intentions, perceived similarity, and wishful identification. This research model is based on an established model, namely Social Identity Theory or Identification theory, developed by Henri Tajfel (1978).

2.3 Social Identification Theory

According to McCoby and Wilson (1957), identification is typically understood as the process by which a viewer shares a character's perspective and vicariously participates in his/her experiences during the program. Henri Tajfel posited the Social Identity Theory or Identification theory, which examines how people form a feeling of identity and belonging by associating with social groups or categories. He defined social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his of his [or her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership [or her] knowledge" (Tajfel, 1978).

The theory posits that people strive to establish and maintain a positive social identity by identifying with groups that they perceive as similar or desirable (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Individuals are motivated to identify with groups or individuals that they perceive as having positive qualities, traits, or characteristics. This id

entification allows individuals to enhance their self-esteem and social status by associating themselves with the positive attributes associated with the group or individual. It is through identification that individuals derive a sense of belonging, social validation, and a framework for self-definition (Tajfel, 1978).

This theory, proposed by Tajfel and Turner, focuses on the role of social identity and group membership in shaping consumer behavior. When ingroup salience is high, the cognitions, attributes, and stereotypes associated with ingroups and outgroups shape self-perception. This can lead consumers to adopt attitudes, beliefs, norms, emotional responses, and behaviors that align with the "ingroup stereotype" (Turner, 1982). Celebrity endorsement leverages the social identities associated with the celebrity to create a sense of identification and connection with the target audience. Consumers who perceive themselves as similar to the

endorsed celebrity may be more inclined to adopt the endorsed brand or product as a way to express their social identity.

2.4 Perceived Similarity

This theory posits that individuals form a sense of identification and connection with a celebrity endorser, leading to the adoption of the endorsed brand as a means of expressing their social identity. Here, social identity theory is particularly relevant for two themes: perceived similarity and wishful identification (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005). Consumer attraction arises because a product or brand reflects certain personality traits of the consumer. Here, it is important to note that perceived similarity is quite different from actual similarity (Montoya et al., 2008). While actual similarity arises from a real likeness in attributes between two individuals, perceived similarity is the belief that one is similar to the other individual. This perception of similarity has been proven to be more powerful than actual similarity due to reasons such as biases and self-esteem regulation (Montoya et al., 2008).

Studies have demonstrated perceived similarity to be associated with the desire to imitate the behavior and traits of others. Viewers tend to identify with characters who share their demographic traits like gender, race, and age. Additionally, they may see themselves in characters' deeper attributes, such as personality, behavior, or life experiences. These perceived similarities can enhance the desire to emulate the character in various aspects, such as attitudes, appearance, behavior, and other traits (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005).

2.5 Wishful Identification

Many researches have acknowledged that identification can extend beyond the viewing moment. Rosengren et al. (1976) highlighted that the most significant aspect might be the enduring nature of this identification, also known as long-term identification with media

characters. This "wishful identification," is a psychological process where an individual desires or attempts to become like another person (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005). Langner et al. (2013) maintain that a brand endorsed by a celebrity reminds the consumer of their ideal societal role or another aspect of their self-image related to social identity.

2.6 Endorser Familiarity

Endorser familiarity is a pivotal aspect of celebrity endorsements, influencing consumer attitudes and purchase intentions significantly. According to Belch and Belch (2001), familiarity encompasses the recognition, popularity, and acceptance of a celebrity by the consumers. The degree to which consumers are familiar with a celebrity can enhance their positive intentions toward a product. This relationship is grounded in the fact that consumers who are frequently exposed to a celebrity tend to develop a liking for them, an effect that is amplified with even brief exposures. The more familiar consumers are with a celebrity, the more likely they are to trust and feel positively towards the endorsed products, thereby increasing their purchase intentions.

Miciak and Shanklin (1994) found that advertising practitioners prioritize attributes such as the image, trustworthiness, and familiarity of celebrities when selecting them for endorsements, indicating that these factors are crucial in aligning the celebrity with the target audience and the product. Similarly, Erdogan et al. (2001) identified that ad agency directors and managers in the United Kingdom consider the match between the celebrity and the target audience, as well as the celebrity-product/brand match, as significant when choosing an endorser. Familiarity with the celebrity enhances their overall image and ensures that the endorser is a safe and effective choice for the campaign.

Triandis (1971) introduces another dimension by discussing how attractiveness goes beyond physical appearance, encompassing virtuous characteristics perceived as desirable by

the audience. The source attractiveness model, which includes similarity, familiarity, and likeability, highlights that these factors collectively enhance the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers. Familiarity, in this context, pertains to the knowledge gained through exposure, while likeability stems from affection for the celebrity due to various traits, including behavior and physical appearance.

Amos et al. (2008) in their meta-analysis, confirm that familiarity and likeability are influential in determining the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements. They argue that familiar celebrities are more readily recalled by consumers, making it easier to remember associated brands or products when making purchase decisions. This suggests that familiarity not only enhances the attractiveness of the celebrity but also bolsters the persuasive power of the advertisement.

Further exploring the concept of "source valence," Ha and Lam (2017) outline that familiarity, along with likeability/attractiveness and similarity, significantly affects the effectiveness of the message delivered by endorsers. Their research shows that familiarity positively impacts purchase intentions because it facilitates easier recall of the celebrity and hence the product. Likewise, Jaffari and Hunjra (2017), with a robust sample of 2038 respondents from diverse demographics, found that both familiarity and likeability/attractiveness directly and significantly impact purchase intentions. These findings underscore the importance of selecting endorsers who are not only well-liked but also familiar to the target audience, enhancing both the memorability and appeal of marketing campaigns.

2.7 Endorser Familiarity and Purchase Intentions

Several empirical studies provide insights into the impact of endorser familiarity on purchase intentions. For instance, research by Kamins (1990) demonstrated that consumers are more likely to purchase products endorsed by celebrities they recognize and feel familiar with,

as this familiarity leads to increased trust and affection towards the endorser. This effect is particularly pronounced in cases where the product is a high-involvement or high-risk purchase, suggesting that familiarity may play a compensatory role in reducing consumer uncertainty.

Copeland et al. (2021) examined the comparative effect of familiar vs. unfamiliar models on Instagram, with the goal of assisting influencers and brands in more successfully entering the market. Factors such as similarity, exposure, perceived interactivity, and information-sharing willingness, which may trigger feelings of parasocial interaction (PSI), were also evaluated. It was found that parasocial interaction developed for both groups, but effects were stronger with the familiar celebrity (Copeland et al., 2021).

Ono and Ono (2024) conducted experiments to observe how the type of endorser (celebrity vs. non-celebrity) influences the effects of gesture style (eager vs. vigilant) and message framing (promotional vs. preventive) on consumer motivation. The findings indicate that familiar celebrity endorsers are more effective than non-celebrity endorsers in promoting eager (vigilant) gestures that align with consumers' promotion (prevention) focus, leading to better product evaluations when the message matches the focus. This research adds to the understanding of celebrity endorsement, highlighting those familiar and likable endorsers, whether celebrities or typical consumers, are more effective. Well-known celebrities have a greater impact on changing consumers' mindsets, while unknown endorsers have a smaller impact. (Ono & Ono, 2024).

Schouten et al. (2020) explored the effects of influencer versus celebrity endorsements on product and advertisement opinions, as well as purchase intentions. The study also examined two potential mediators: credibility (comprising knowledge and trustworthiness) and identification (including perceived similarity and wishful identification). Additionally, the

moderating effect of product-endorser fit was investigated. The findings revealed that endorser familiarity significantly enhances wishful identification, perceived similarity, and purchase intentions. This indicates that when consumers are familiar with the endorser, they are more likely to identify with them, perceive greater similarity, and have stronger intentions to buy the endorsed product.

Influencers' effectiveness is rooted in their similarity to consumers, and the perceived closeness between them (Supriyanto et al., 2023). To investigate how perceived credibility, trustworthiness, perceived expertise, likeability, similarity, familiarity, and attractiveness influence bakery consumer purchasing decisions, Supriyanto et al. (2023) sampled 103 students who consume bakery products. The findings indicated that fashion influencers are highly influential among young people, impacting digital and online behavior. Path analysis showed that perceived similarity and familiarity with the endorser significantly increased purchase intentions (Supriyanto et al., 2023).

Frank and Mitsumoto (2023) expanded the source attractiveness model to explore how various unexplored characteristics of an athlete endorser's attractiveness influence customer equity drivers. Upon analyzing 1319 consumer evaluations of athlete-endorsed ads they found that participants' familiarity and perceived similarity with the endorser significantly positively relate to purchase intentions (Frank & Mitsumoto, 2023).

In the realm of sports marketing, Bush et al. (2004) found that athlete endorsers who are well-known and positively regarded significantly influence the purchase intentions of their fans. The study highlighted that familiarity not only enhances positive feelings towards the product but also increases the perceived expertise of the endorser, thereby boosting the persuasive effectiveness of the advertisement.

Moreover, research in the context of online influencer marketing has shown that endorser familiarity increases consumer engagement and purchase intentions through enhanced parasocial interaction. In a study by Chung and Cho (2017), it was found that followers of familiar influencers are more likely to purchase products recommended by these influencers, driven by a sense of trust and personal connection established through ongoing interactions.

2.8 Green Purchase Intentions

The term purchase intention describes a person's desire or plan to acquire a specific good or service in the future. Purchase intention can be defined as "the process by which consumers make a plan to purchase a product/service due to advertisements delivered through advertising media" (Lee et al., 2017). It is a crucial construct in consumer behavior research as it reflects the likelihood of an individual translating their positive attitudes and preferences into an actual purchase decision. Green purchase intention refers to "the probability and willingness of a person to give preference to products with eco-friendly features over other conventional products in their purchase considerations" (Rashid, 2009). As consumers become increasingly aware of the importance of environmental conservation, they recognize that their purchasing decisions can significantly impact ecological well-being. This awareness has prompted changes in consumer behavior and business practices, leading to a growing preference for green products (Mazar & Zhong, 2010; Zhuang et al., 2021). Green products are specifically designed to protect or enhance the environment by conserving energy and resources, minimizing or eliminating toxic waste and pollution, and reducing the use of harmful substances (Chen & Chai, 2010). Unlike traditional products, green products may be biodegradable, renewable, reusable, or recyclable, resulting in minimal environmental impact (Dangelico & Pontrandolfo, 2010).

Green purchase intentions refer to consumers' willingness or planned behavior to choose environmentally friendly products over conventional alternatives. There are many psychological, social, and economic aspects that impact this concept, which is frequently explored in relation to sustainable consumer behavior. According to Lee (2008), green purchase intentions are driven by a consumer's environmental concern and the desire to minimize personal or societal harm by purchasing products that are perceived to be more environmentally benign.

Research has extensively documented the factors that enhance green purchase intentions. For instance, a study by Chen (2010) found that environmental awareness significantly predicts green purchase behavior, suggesting that increased knowledge and concern about environmental issues can motivate consumers to make greener choices. This relationship is often mediated by personal norms and perceived consumer effectiveness, where individuals believe that their choices can make a difference in environmental conservation.

Another critical factor is the influence of social norms and subjective norms on green purchase intentions. Paul et al. (2016) demonstrated that when individuals perceive that significant others expect them to engage in environmentally friendly purchasing, they are more likely to do so. This effect is particularly strong in collectivist cultures where community and familial expectations can greatly influence individual behavior.

The role of perceived product effectiveness and value in shaping green purchase intentions cannot be understated. According to Testa et al. (2012), consumers are more likely to purchase green products when they perceive them as equally or more effective than non-green alternatives. Additionally, the perceived value that encompasses the benefits and costs associated with purchasing green products also plays a crucial role. As Hartmann and

Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2012) pointed out, consumers are willing to pay a premium for green products if they believe these products offer additional personal or societal benefits.

Moreover, branding and market communication play significant roles in shaping green purchase intentions. Laroche et al. (2001) found that brands that effectively communicate their environmental benefits, through green branding and eco-labels, are more likely to influence purchase intentions. Effective marketing that highlights not only the environmental benefits but also the personal advantages (such as health benefits) can enhance the attractiveness of green products.

Studies have shown that familiar endorsers are perceived as more credible and trustworthy, qualities that are particularly important in the context of green marketing, where consumer skepticism is often higher. For instance, Erdogan et al. (2001) highlight that familiarity with a celebrity endorser can enhance the perceived credibility of the endorsement, making the marketing message more persuasive. This is crucial for green products, where the authenticity of environmental claims is often questioned by consumers. When familiar celebrities endorse green products, their established credibility and consumer trust can transfer to the products, thereby boosting green purchase intentions.

Furthermore, the influence of endorser familiarity on green purchase intentions is supported by the mere exposure effect, where increased exposure to a familiar figure enhances a person's predisposition towards the endorsed products (Zajonc, 1968). In the context of green products, this effect can be particularly potent as it can help overcome initial resistance or skepticism towards new or unfamiliar eco-friendly products. Consumer skepticism towards green marketing claims is notably higher due to prevalent greenwashing practices, where companies misleadingly advertise their products as environmentally friendly (Nyilasy et al., 2014). Thus, we propose the following:

H1: Endorser familiarity has a positive impact on green purchase intentions.

Certain factors can moderate the relationship between endorser familiarity and purchase intentions. For example, Smollan and Sayers (2009) indicated that the congruence between the image of the endorser and the type of product significantly influences how endorser familiarity affects purchase intentions. If consumers perceive a mismatch between the endorser's public persona and the product, the effectiveness of familiarity may be diminished.

Additionally, emotional attachment to the endorser has been identified as a potential mediator in the relationship between endorser familiarity and purchase intentions. In their study, Thomson (2006) noted that emotional bonds formed with a familiar endorser can lead to more robust purchase intentions, as these relationships often carry emotional weight that influences consumer decisions. Cultural dimensions also play a crucial role in how endorser familiarity affects purchase intentions. In cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, for example, familiar endorsers might be more effective due to the reduced perceived risk associated with their endorsed products (Hofstede, 1984). Similarly, in collectivist cultures, where community and relationships are emphasized, familiar endorsers can leverage their influence more effectively compared to individualist cultures.

2.9 Familiarity and Perceived Similarity

The literature emphasizes the significance of interpersonal familiarity in the accuracy of personality judgments. Studies such as those by Funder and Colvin (1988) and Hayes and Dunning (1997) demonstrate that familiarity between individuals enhances the agreement among judges regarding personality assessments. This suggests that as individuals become better acquainted, their perceptions of each other's personalities align more closely with how individuals perceive themselves, indicating increased perceived personality similarity.

Research by Moreland and Zajonc (1982) further explores the interplay between familiarity, similarity, and attraction through two experiments. In their first experiment, participants rated faces they had seen multiple times as more likeable and more similar to themselves, indicating that familiarity enhances perceived similarity largely due to increased feelings of attraction. The second experiment manipulated perceived similarity through bogus information about the faces viewed. The results showed that perceived similarity led to increased likeability and familiarity, predominantly mediated by changes in attraction. These findings highlight the complex relationship between familiarity, similarity, and attraction, underscoring the psychological processes that influence social perception and interpersonal relations.

No research so far has studied the role of endorsement type as moderator and perceived similarity and wishful identification as mediators between Endorser Familiarity and Green Purchase Intentions. This research aims to fill this gap through moderated mediation analysis. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2a: Endorser familiarity has a positive impact on perceived similarity.

H2b: Perceived similarity mediates the relationship between endorser familiarity and green purchase intentions.

2.10 Familiarity and Wishful Identification

The impact of wishful identification with online video game streaming personalities on viewer behavioral loyalty has been studied by Lim et al. (2020). The study particularly highlights how emotional engagement with other viewers and wishful identification contribute to forming a strong PSR, which in turn leads to increased behavioral loyalty, defined as the likelihood of continuing to view a live-streaming game. The research was conducted through a survey administered by a professional survey firm in South Korea, using a representative

sample from a national panel. Structural equation modeling was employed to analyze the data, revealing that both wishful identification and emotional engagement significantly impact behavioral loyalty indirectly through parasocial relationships. This finding suggests that viewers who identify with their favorite live-streamer and engage emotionally with other viewers are more likely to develop a strong parasocial relationship with the streamer, enhancing their commitment to repeatedly viewing the live streams. As viewers watch streams and interact, they experience a parasocial relationship development, where the repeated exposure and interaction with the streamer enhance their sense of connection. This sense of connection, facilitated by wishful identification with the streamer and emotional engagement with the viewing community, solidifies the viewer's loyalty to the streamer. Essentially, viewers who see parts of themselves in the streamer or aspire to be like them (wishful identification) and who feel a communal bond with other viewers (emotional engagement) find themselves more deeply embedded in the streaming community, which reinforces their commitment to returning to the stream (Lim et al., 2020).

H3a: Endorser familiarity has a positive impact on wishful identification.

H3b: Wishful identification mediates the relationship between endorser familiarity and green purchase intentions.

2.11 Celebrity Endorser

A celebrity endorser is defined as "anyone who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement" (McCraken, 1989, p. 310). However, Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) contend that this definition is obsolete in contemporary advertising landscape where celebrity endorsements now appear across various communication channels beyond traditional advertising, such as social media. Moreover, there is a wide array of celebrity-branded products other than consumer goods that

celebrities endorse, such as business-to-business products and consumer services. They provide an updated definition of the term celebrity endorsement as: "an agreement between an individual who enjoys public recognition (a celebrity) and an entity (e.g., a brand) to use the celebrity for the purpose of promoting the entity" (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016, p. 644).

Using celebrities in marketing communications is a common strategy for major firms to enhance brand image, and increase sales. Research indicates that around one in every four advertisements employs celebrity endorsers in Western nations, and the proportion is even higher in Asian countries like Korea, Japan, and India (Wang, 2018). Companies invest heavily in associating their brands with endorsers who possess qualities like attractiveness, likability, and trustworthiness. They believe these attributes are transferable and will lead to successful campaign outcomes (Erdogan, 1999).

2.12 Celebrity Endorsement and Green Purchase Intentions

Marketers often utilize various methods to position green products in consumers' minds, and one common approach is celebrity endorsement, which enhances the effectiveness of advertisements (Eren-Erdogmus et al., 2016). With an aim to understand the impact of celebrity endorsers on the effectiveness of green advertising, researchers used a 2x2 factorial design to test durable (refrigerators) and non-durable (milk) products with celebrities. The research, conducted in Istanbul with 240 respondents, found that celebrity credibility and attractiveness influence consumer attitudes differently based on product type. For milk, a non-durable product, celebrity credibility led to more positive attitudes, while for refrigerators, a durable product, celebrity attractiveness was more effective. These results suggest that the nature of the product—its direct impact on health versus its environmental benefits—affects how consumers respond to celebrity endorsements (Eren-Erdogmus et al., 2016).

Another study that explores the role of celebrity credibility in green advertising, utilizing Ohanian's (1990) three-dimensional credibility scale, which includes attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. The findings suggest that consumers are more likely to believe in an advertisement if it is endorsed by a trusted celebrity, whose image and reputation enhance the ad's authenticity. Attractive celebrities draw consumer attention, while those perceived as knowledgeable about the product further bolster consumer trust in the advertisement. Consistent with prior research, the study found that celebrity credibility significantly shapes consumer attitudes toward the advertisement (Aad), which in turn positively influences attitudes toward the brand (Ab) and purchase intentions (PI). Thus, incorporating credible celebrities in green advertisements is effective for improving consumer perceptions and intentions, affirming the importance of celebrity endorsements in marketing strategies for green products (Kumar & Tripathi, 2019).

It is very important to select the right celebrity endorsers to effectively promote green products, as their credibility can significantly boost consumer engagement and sales (Abdullah Al Mamun et al., 2023). In research that examines the impact of celebrity endorsement on the purchase intentions of Malaysian consumers for green skincare products during COVID-19, it was found that celebrity endorsers with high credibility attributes—such as trustworthiness, appealing personality, dignified image, and expertise—significantly influence consumer attitudes towards advertisements and brands, thereby increasing purchase intentions and willingness to pay a premium. Consumers aged 18 to 25 are particularly responsive to these endorsements, as they tend to have discretionary income and prioritize skincare. Although the trustworthiness of celebrity endorsers had a negligible impact on consumer attitudes towards green skincare brands, attributes like personality and expertise had a substantial positive effect. Consumers associate credible celebrities with brand ethicality and credibility, enhancing their

overall attitude towards the brand and their purchase intentions (Abdullah Al Mamun et al., 2023).

Celebrity attractiveness and cause fit significantly enhance purchase intentions through their positive impact on consumer attitudes (Lili et al., 2022). One study confirmed the significant impact of celebrity endorsement and brand equity on young Chinese consumers' intentions to purchase green cosmetics. Celebrity attractiveness, trustworthiness, and cause fit positively influenced attitudes toward green cosmetics, with cause fit having the most substantial impact. Brand loyalty, credibility, and perceived quality also positively affected brand equity, while brand awareness and associations did not significantly influence it, likely due to low awareness among respondents. Additionally, the study showed that positive attitudes toward green products significantly boosted purchase intentions, and brand equity further reinforced this effect. The mediating analysis indicated that celebrity attractiveness and cause fit significantly enhanced purchase intentions through their positive impact on consumer attitudes (Lili et al., 2022).

Media should focus on creative advertising, fostering social connections, and leveraging social capital to enhance the dissemination of environmental public service announcements. Li et al. (2022) analyzed the impact of celebrity-endorsed environmental advertisements on promoting a green economy. They find that Public Service Announcements (PSA) featuring celebrities are more effective than those without, as evidenced by participant eye-tracking data. Celebrity PSAs garnered longer and more frequent gazes and had better re-recognition compared to non-celebrity PSAs. Among different types of celebrities, hosts or anchors were more effective than actors and sports figures in engaging viewers. The study also explored the sharing behavior of environmental PSAs on social media, identifying key factors

such as perceived attitudes towards others' engagement, social media experiences, and social capital. These factors influence individuals' likelihood to share PSAs (Li et al., 2022).

The influence of green brand image, green advertising, and celebrity endorsements on the purchase intention of green products in Jakarta was studied by Darlius and Keni (2022), revealing that these factors collectively account for 37.1% of purchase intention variance. The data, gathered from predominantly young female private employees, showed that green brand image had the most significant impact, followed by green advertising and celebrity endorsement. Hypothesis testing confirmed that a positive green brand image encourages environmental care, attractive green advertising increases awareness and interest, and credible celebrity endorsements enhance product memorability and purchase intention. Thus, the study concludes that all three factors significantly and positively affect the purchase intention of green products, with the green brand image being the most influential (Darlius & Keni, 2021).

Kamel (2020) examined the mediating role of celebrity endorsement in green advertisements to improve the intention of Egyptian Millennials towards environmental behaviours in tourist destinations. The study reaffirms the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements in advertising and underscores the role of celebrity endorsements in promoting environmentally responsible behaviors, particularly among millennials. However, despite the recognized importance of green advertising in fostering eco-friendly intentions and behaviors, this study suggests that green ads lacking celebrity endorsements fail to significantly influence millennials' environmental intentions. Celebrities can enhance the effectiveness of green ads by increasing consumer attention, trust, and recall of the message. Notably, the study finds that millennials are highly receptive to ads featuring trustworthy and attractive celebrities, particularly movie stars, musicians, and sports personalities. Furthermore, social media platforms serve as key channels for millennials to follow celebrities and stay updated on their

activities, indicating the potential for leveraging celebrity endorsements to promote environmental responsibility. Celebrity endorsement is found to play a fully mediating role in the relationship between green ads and millennials' intentions towards environmental behaviors, suggesting that celebrities can enhance millennials' confidence in environmental messages conveyed through ads (Kamel, 2020).

The effects of Twitter followers, electronic word-of-mouth (eWoM) valence, and celebrity type (prosocial vs. antisocial) on consumer behavior in Twitter-based marketing have also been explored. Jin and Phua (2014) performed an experimental study, celebrities with a high number of followers were rated higher in source credibility and increased consumers' intentions to engage with and purchase the endorsed products. Positive tweets from celebrities with many followers led to higher product involvement and purchase intentions, while negative tweets from less-followed celebrities increased the spread of eWoM. In the second experiment of the same study, prosocial celebrities with high follower counts were found to foster stronger social identification, enhancing purchase intentions through this identification. The study highlights the significant role of celebrity endorsers, especially those with substantial followings and positive reputations, in enhancing brand perception and consumer engagement on Twitter (Jin & Phua, 2014).

In an attempt to understand the role of "real-life" contexts in enhancing consumer-brand responses, Zhang and Hung (2020) conducted an online survey to explore the impact of different celebrity-brand associations on consumer responses. The study selected bottled mineral water as the stimulus due to its high utilitarian and symbolic values, with Whistler brand chosen for its unavailability in China, minimizing prior associations. Celebrity selection involved a pretest where respondents chose a celebrity based on attractiveness and reputation. Three conditions were created: an ad endorsement, product placement in a TV series featuring

the endorser, and a real-life scenario where the endorser was pictured with Whistler water. Respondents, after observing images, completed tasks related to brand recall and context identification. 345 respondents, mainly young and well-educated, participated. Results suggested that a "real" endorsement context elicited better brand responses compared to commercial endorsements. This effect was mediated by consumers' para-social interaction with the celebrity, indicating the significance of authenticity in celebrity-brand associations in influencing consumer perceptions and behaviors (Zhang & Hung, 2020).

2.13 Social Media Influencer Marketing and Green Purchase Intentions

It is important to align influencer messages with environmental values in marketing communication (Boerman et al., 2022). One such study addresses the urgent need for behavior change to combat climate change, focusing on the potential of influencers, specifically "greenfluencers" on Instagram, to encourage pro-environmental behaviors. Congruence increases influencer credibility and pro-environmental intentions, irrespective of influencer size. However, influencer credibility does not mediate the effect of congruence on intentions (Boerman et al., 2022).

Generation Z is increasingly influential in the market, both in terms of purchasing power and trendsetting (Zatwarnicka-Madura et al., 2022). This generation spends significant time on social media, where they find information, inspiration, and motivation. Skeptical of traditional marketing, they respond better to influencer marketing. They are also particularly sensitive to environmental issues. In one study, it was aimed to explore the potential of using influencer marketing to promote green energy among Generation Z in Poland. The findings highlighted the popularity of social media among Generation Z and their active engagement with influencers. While more than half of the respondents saw influencers as useful in promoting green energy, the majority indicated that their decisions to choose green energy were

more influenced by the opinions of peers than by influencers (Zatwarnicka-Madura et al., 2022).

Green influencers or "greenfluencers" can act as agents of social change through sponsored messages (Kapoor et al., 2023). The roles of message authenticity and product sustainability image is important, with the type of product (utilitarian vs. hedonic) moderating these effects. Concrete message appeals enhance purchase intentions more effectively than abstract appeals, mediated by perceived authenticity and sustainability. Additionally, product type moderates this effect, with concrete appeals being more effective for utilitarian products and abstract appeals for hedonic products (Kapoor et al., 2023).

The effect of social media influencer marketing on sustainable food purchases was measured by Wu et al. (2023). The influence of social media influencers' (SMIs) intimate self-disclosure, environmental concern, and spending self-control on consumers' intentions to purchase sustainable food was highlighted with the mediating role of consumption value. Analyzing data from 628 respondents, the study finds that these SMI traits positively impact sustainable food purchase intentions via social and epistemic values. No significant generational differences in these effects were found. Spending self-control was identified as the most crucial factor, followed by environmental concern, predicting sustainable food purchase intentions with 99.4% accuracy (Wu et al., 2023).

Companies need to employ influencer marketing strategies to promote sustainable products and contribute to understanding Generation Z's sustainable consumption behavior influenced by both influencer marketing and environmental concerns (Panopoulos et al., 2022). The influence of environmental concern, eco-labeling, influencers, and user-generated content on Generation Z's intention to make green purchases was studied in one such study. By integrating influencers and user-generated content with environmental concern, the study aims

to enhance understanding of Generation Z's green purchase behavior and inform future marketing strategies. Using a quantitative approach with an online survey of 393 Generation Z individuals, Structural Equation Modeling was employed to analyze the data. The study confirms all hypotheses and identifies key variables influencing Generation Z's green purchase intention. Specifically, it highlights the significant positive impact of environmental concern on user-generated content and eco-labeling, as well as the positive influence of influencers on user-generated content (Panopoulos et al., 2022).

2.14 Social Media Influencer and Social Identity Theory

Celebrity endorsement has been relatively understudied in the context of social identity theory. Social identity is particularly impactful on influencer marketing, particularly how followers' perceptions of themselves in relation to influencer communities influence their purchase intentions. Drawing on social identity theory, Farivar and Wang (2022) examined the effects of social identity, interest alignment, and influencers' opinion leadership on purchase intentions, with a focus on the moderating role of storytelling. Empirical data from 467 Instagram users indicate that all three factors—social identity, interest fit, and opinion leadership—positively influence purchase intentions, with social identity having the most significant impact. Additionally, storytelling by influencers enhances these effects. By analyzing influencer marketing through the lens of social identity, this study provides deeper insights into the mechanisms that drive its effectiveness (Farivar & Wang, 2022).

Social media influencers have shown their marketing value in sponsorship deals, and brands and non-profits are now using them to promote social causes. However, the traits that contribute to influencers' commercial success and their effectiveness in cause-related marketing are not well understood (Lou et al., 2024). One study explores these traits through in-depth interviews, focusing on source credibility, parasocial relationships, and congruence

effects. Key factors identified include credibility, followers' identification with influencers, and congruence between influencers and causes. While influencers can raise awareness and expand the reach of social messages, this does not always lead to behavioral changes due to followers' constraints like inconvenience and financial cost. Interviewees view influencers as role models, desiring to imitate their behaviors, which makes influencer marketing more effective than traditional ads in promoting prosocial behaviors (Lou et al., 2024).

Environmentally friendly influences significantly affect perceived fit and environmental consciousness, which in turn positively influence green behavioral intention (İlker Kılıç & Mert Gürlek, 2023). According to the results based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory, environmentally friendly product-oriented influence and environmental sustainability-oriented influence - sub-dimensions of green influencer marketing - positively and significantly impact environmental consciousness and perceived similarity with personal interests. Environmental consciousness and perceived fit with personal interests were found to be key determinants of green behavioral intention, consistent with earlier studies. Additionally, these factors mediated the effect of green influencer marketing on green behavioral intention. (İlker Kılıç & Mert Gürlek, 2023).

Opinion leaders play a significant role in advising other consumers, particularly in the fashion industry where Instagram reigns as the primary platform for such influencers. Casalo et al. (2020) delve into the key factors driving opinion leadership and its outcomes within this domain. Drawing from data collected from 808 followers of a fashion-focused Instagram account, their findings highlight originality and uniqueness as pivotal attributes for perceived opinion leadership on Instagram. Moreover, they found that opinion leadership significantly impacts consumer behavioral intentions towards both the influencer (e.g., intention to engage with the account and recommend it) and the fashion industry (e.g., intention to follow fashion

advice). Additionally, the perceived similarity between the account's content and the consumer's personality amplifies the influence of opinion leadership on the intention to heed the advice shared (Casaló et al., 2020).

Research has also explored the impact of virtual influencers (VIs) on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, focusing on their degree of human likeness (Li & Ma, 2023). Through two experiments involving 178 and 162 participants respectively, it was found that more humanlike VIs were perceived as more authentic, resulting in more favorable advertising attitudes and increased purchase intentions. Specifically, when presenting hedonic products with more humanlike VIs, consumers reported higher levels of perceived similarity and wishful identification, further enhancing the advertising effects. These findings shed light on the importance of human likeness in VIs and offer insights for both theory and marketing practice (Li & Ma, 2023).

The influence of Instagram on consumer behavior, particularly among young women, is affected by different types of celebrities on source credibility, buying intention, and social identification (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). While traditional celebrities hold influence, non-traditional figures like bloggers, YouTube personalities, and 'Instafamous' profiles wield greater power due to their perceived credibility and relatability. Participants expressed a preference for Instagram profiles projecting positive images and offering supportive reviews. Moreover, they showed willingness to trust celebrity endorsers, viewing them as credible sources when introduced to unfamiliar brands or websites. The study also highlighted participants' aspiration towards certain celebrities' lifestyles, manifesting in emulation of fashion, makeup, posting styles, and lifestyle choices (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

2.15 Celebrity vs Influencer

Businesses are increasingly selecting social media influencers, such as vloggers and Instafamous people, over traditional celebrity endorsers for their marketing campaigns. In a study that aimed to compare the messaging approaches of celebrities and Social Media Influencers (SMIs), it was found that while celebrities tend to feature shorter, more visually polished videos, SMIs produce longer, more detailed content often filmed independently, with a focus on informative content, catering to their community's needs. The analysis also revealed that celebrities emphasize ego, social, and sensory aspects, aiming to connect consumers with the brand through association with the celebrity. Conversely, SMIs prioritize rational and acute needs, offering detailed insights and practical solutions. They use humor and storytelling more than celebrities, leveraging narrative techniques to captivate viewers (Sharma, 2023).

It's unknown, though, how successful influencer endorsements are in comparison to conventional celebrity endorsements. In order to close this disparity, Schouten et al. (2020) looked at how influencer vs. celebrity endorsements affected opinions regarding the product and commercial as well as buying intention. The moderating effect of product-endorser fit in this association was also investigated in this study. Furthermore, two potential mediators were examined: credibility (knowledge and trustworthiness) and identification (perceived similarity and wishful identification). There were two experiments carried out, with 131 and 446 individuals overall. Products related to fitness and beauty were the focus of the first study, while food and clothing were the subject of the second. The results showed that participants related to influencers more than they did to celebrities, thought they were more like them, and trusted influencers more than they did celebrities. Additionally, it was revealed that the relationship between the type of endorser and advertisement efficacy is significantly influenced by similarity, wishful identification, and trust—all of which function as mediating factors. It's

interesting to notice that product-endorser fit did not explain the relationship between the type of endorser and any mediating or dependent characteristics. Overall, the results highlight the advantages of using influencers as endorsers rather than more established celebrities and emphasize the elevated role of similarity, identity, and trust of consumers in social media influencers.

Similar research was done, including a study by Jin et al. (2019) that looks at how Instagram celebrities and traditional celebrities affect source trustworthiness, brand attitude, envious behaviour, and social presence. The independent variable of celebrity type, the mediator of social presence, and the moderator of self-discrepancy are all included in the theoretical model put forward in this study. A randomised two-group comparative trial with 104 people was carried out. It was found that consumers who were exposed to brand posts by Instagram celebrities felt more envious than those who were exposed to brand posts by traditional celebrities because they thought the source was more reliable, showed a more favourable attitude towards the endorsed brand, felt more socially present, and experienced a stronger sense of social presence.

The Western literature points to the same conclusion that social media influencers are deemed more convincing than traditional celebrities. These findings, however, may not hold for developing countries like Pakistan. In one surprising study conducted in India, the results indicated that mainstream celebrities were more effective endorsers compared to social media influencers, regardless of whether the celebrity's image was congruent or incongruent with the endorsed product (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2020). The effectiveness of the endorsement was found to be mediated by the strength of the parasocial relationship that Indian consumers developed with the celebrities and influencers. Due to India's materialistic culture, consumers formed stronger parasocial relationships with mainstream celebrities, given their higher wealth,

power, and status, compared to social media influencers. However, the strength of the parasocial relationship varied depending on consumers' regulatory focus. These findings shed light on the dynamics of endorsement effectiveness and the role of parasocial relationships in a materialistic cultural context like India.

A recent study, examining the impact of influencer and celebrity marketing on consumer purchase intentions in Pakistan also found similar results. The research uses a quantitative method with an experimental survey targeting Pakistani consumers. The survey evaluates perceptions of endorsements and purchase intentions, alongside assessments of product endorser fit and credibility. Results indicate a significant effect of product endorser fit on purchase intentions but no significant difference between influencer and celebrity endorsements (Qureshi, 2023).

H4: The effect of endorser familiarity on perceived similarity is moderated by endorsement type, such that social media influencer marketing leads to greater perceived similarity than celebrity endorsement.

H5: The effect of endorser familiarity on wishful identification is moderated by endorsement type, such that social media influencer marketing leads to greater WI than celebrity endorsement.

2.16 Celebrity Endorsement and Pakistan

In Pakistan, celebrity endorsements have a profound impact on brands, leading to exponential sales growth driven by the confidence inspired in consumers (Khan & Zaman, 2021). There have been studies in Pakistan that examine the influence of celebrity endorsements as a modern marketing technique on customers' purchase behavior. Khan and Zaman carried out one such investigation in 2021. Incorporating the signalling theory and a quantitative research methodology, 300 potential consumers of luxury brands in Pakistan were

polled using a standardised questionnaire. According to the research, celebrity brand ambassadors have a favourable impact on customers' views of psychological ownership, brand trust, and brand attitude. Importantly, the relationship between celebrity endorsements and purchase intentions of luxury brands is mediated by the customer's psychological ownership, brand trust, and brand attitude, functioning through many routes.

Another similar study measured the influence of Instagram influencers on consumer attitude and purchasing behavior, taking into account factors such as exposure to Instagram, trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, and parasocial interaction (Asfar et al., 2022). The study focused specifically on young Pakistani female users of Instagram. The research methodology employed was quantitative in nature. To test the research hypotheses, a conceptual model incorporating the variables of interest was developed. Data was collected from 250 respondents through an online survey link distributed via social networks such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter, targeting young Pakistani female Instagram users from cities such as Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Peshawar, and Karachi. The survey data revealed that parasocial interaction exhibited a stronger positive relationship with consumer attitude compared to other variables. Additionally, the relationships between trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, parasocial interaction, and purchase intention also displayed positive associations. The results of this study indicate that all five independent variables examined - Exposure to Instagram, trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, and parasocial interaction - have a significant and positive influence on the dependent variables, namely consumer attitude and purchase intentions. The findings also suggest that parasocial interaction plays a crucial role in strengthening consumer attitude and purchase intentions. This effect is further amplified when social influencers maintain regular and updated connections with their audience, sharing their daily life events and experiences. Moreover, the content

provided by social influencers serves as a source of inspiration and motivation for young female Instagram users, contributing to their knowledge and awareness of emerging trends.

Investigating how particular characteristics of social media influencers affect their credibility and customers' purchase intentions in Pakistan was the goal of a different study. An online survey was completed by 380 participants, who made up the quota sample. The results showed that influencers' information quality, entertainment value, and reliability all had a major direct impact on their credibility, which in turn had an indirect impact on customers' buy intentions. Furthermore, customers' intentions to make purchases were directly influenced by the reliability and reputation of social media influencers. The findings validated the source credibility model, highlighting the significance of reliability as a critical component impacting influencer dependability and consumers' purchase decisions. Additionally, it was shown that influencers' information quality had a substantial impact on both factors. The results demonstrated how social media influencers' characteristics shape their trustworthiness and, in turn, impact customers' propensity to buy (Azhar et al., 2022). Based on source credibility theory, another research examines the role of emotional attachment and influence of presumed influence as dual mediators in the relationship between social media influencers' credibility and followers' intention to perform a behavior within the Pakistani fashion context. Data was collected from 346 social media users using a self-administered questionnaire. The results indicate that social media influencers' credibility has a surprising negative impact on intention to perform a behavior (Shoukat et al., 2023). However, another study that investigated how credibility dimensions of social media influencers (Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, and Expertise) impact consumer behavior, specifically purchasing intention and attitudes toward brands yielded different results (Baig & Shahzad, 2023). The research collected data from 149 Pakistani consumers following influencers in the fashion industry. The findings indicate a positive influence of influencer credibility dimensions on both customer attitudes toward

brands and purchase intentions. The study holds significance for fashion and style influencers, shedding light on factors driving follower loyalty and their substantial impact on follower behavior.

In response to the declining effectiveness of traditional mass media communication, social media influencers have emerged as an integral part of firms' strategic communication. Consequently, it is crucial to examine the impact of communication through SMIs on marketing outcomes, particularly purchase intentions. This study investigates how technology-oriented SMIs cultivate parasocial relationships with their followers, considering fairness dimensions (information, distributive, interpersonal, and procedural) and source credibility dimensions (attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, and similarity). Data was collected from 506 active social media users using purposive sampling. The findings demonstrate that attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, similarity, interpersonal, procedural, and information fairness positively contribute to fostering parasocial relationships with followers. Furthermore, the study reveals an indirect positive influence of attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, similarity, interpersonal, procedural, and information fairness on consumers' purchase intentions mediated by parasocial relationships (Ashraf et al., 2023).

Another Pakistani study looked at the influence of Instagram beauty influencers' content on female university students' decision-making and impulse-buying behaviour (Zia et al., 2021). It also examined how source credibility functions as a mediator in this relationship. The study adopts a quantitative methodology, and 400 females between the ages of 18 and 35 who attend four universities in Lahore are chosen for the sample using a purposive sampling procedure. Through the use of an online survey, data is gathered. The findings show a strong positive correlation between purchasing decisions and the content of Instagram beauty influencers. Additionally, using Instagram beauty influencers' content is strongly linked to

impulsive buying. The results also suggest a mediation role for source credibility in these connections (Zia et al., 2021).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is organized into seven sections, and describes the methods used in the study following a thorough evaluation of the literature. The research design, which includes information on sample and data collection techniques, is presented in this section in order to fulfill the goals and objectives of the study. It features choice population and sampling technique, sample size, research design, data collection method, procedure and measures used in the

3.2 Target Population

The aim of the research is to compare how traditional and familiarity of social media influencers affect consumers' inclinations to buy green products in Pakistan. This research recognizes the need to go beyond the western-centric approach and explore the unique cultural dynamics that shape consumer behaviors and experiences in Pakistan, which varies considerably from the West due to social, cultural, political and economic factors. In addition, the social media marketing practices are getting increasing recognition in Pakistan and there is an increase in advertising through social media influencers (Geyser, 2020).

Therefore, the sample will represent the Pakistani population, particularly millennials and generation Z who grew up with social media and are familiar with both traditional and social media influencers. The population targeted for the purpose of this research consists of educated urban millennials and Generation Z consumers in the Islamabad-Rawalpindi Twin Cities of Pakistan. These demographics are chosen based on their notable differences in media consumption, environmental awareness, and purchasing power, which are essential for understanding green marketing dynamics. Millennials, with their greater spending power and

established purchasing habits, contrast with Generation Z, who are noted for their environmental consciousness and influential social media usage (Mude & Undale, 2023). Educated millennials and Generation Z participants were specifically chosen for this research because they represent a critical segment tilting towards eco-sensitive behaviors, with a demonstrated inclination towards spending on environmentally friendly goods. The focus on educated individuals, in particular, aligns with findings that higher education levels correlate with increased concern about climate impacts and a greater preparedness to invest in sustainable products (Wilson, 2021; Gallup, 2023).

3.3 Sample Size

A pool of 472 participants was collected. The choice of a sample size of 472 participants, despite huge population of Islamabad-Rawalpindi area, can be considered adequate due to several pragmatic reasons. First, this number strikes a balance between achieving sufficient statistical power to detect meaningful differences or relationships and managing logistical constraints such as cost, time, and available resources. Secondly, a sample size of this magnitude allows for detailed data analysis and quality control without overwhelming the data management processes. Moreover, it provides a manageable framework for administering the survey and ensures a thorough follow-up with participants, crucial for maintaining high response rates and data integrity. This size is large enough to represent the educated urban millennials and Generation Z's diverse opinions and behaviors regarding green purchase intentions, yet small enough to remain practical and feasible under typical research conditions.

The purposive sampling method was employed to specifically include participants with at least a bachelor's degree, ensuring that they possess the requisite educational background to understand and evaluate green products effectively. This approach also strategically excludes

minors, who may not have the legal autonomy or the cognitive development to fully comprehend or make purchasing decisions regarding the green context.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Data was collected online via a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms, a method that ensures broad reach and accessibility among the target demographic predominantly active on digital platforms. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp, which are popular among both millennials and Generation Z in urban Pakistan, were used for online distribution.

The validity of the experimental manipulation was made sure through post-exposure to confirm their recognition and understanding of the endorser type (celebrity or influencer). This manipulation check was crucial for confirming that the observed effects on the dependent variables were indeed due to the perceived type of endorser and not other extraneous factors.

Each participant provided informed consent, emphasizing ethical compliance with voluntary participation, confidentiality of responses, and the right to draw back from the study any time. This ethical adherence not only aligns with international research standards but also enhances the credibility and reliability of the research findings.

3.5 Choice of Product and Endorser

To assess green purchase intention, the product selected for advertisement was bamboo toothbrush, an environmentally friendly substitute for conventional plastic toothbrushes. This product choice was made to represent an everyday item used universally, irrespective of individual preferences and demographic attributes such as age and gender.

Endorsers were carefully chosen based on their status as prominent celebrities and social media influencers within Pakistan's context. The selection criteria encompassed

considerations of their follower count and public perception among the target demographic. Furthermore, two additional selection criteria were employed to ensure comparability among endorsers and target population. Firstly, international celebrities and influencers were excluded, given the dominance of Pakistani celebrities in the local market. Secondly, to maintain a homogeneous age distribution among endorsers and enhance their relevance to the target population, individuals over the age of 50 were excluded from consideration.

3.6 Research Design and Strategy

This study employs a between-subject experimental design to rigorously assess the effects of different types of endorsers on consumer behavior concerning green purchase intentions. This design is particularly suitable for isolating the influence of a single variable— in this case, the type of endorser (celebrity vs. influencer)—while controlling for other potential confounding factors. The effectiveness of each type of endorser is measured through the variables of endorser familiarity, perceived similarity, wishful identification, and green purchase intentions.

One of two groups was assigned to participants at random. One group viewed an advertisement featuring a well-known celebrity endorsing a bamboo toothbrush, an eco-friendly alternative to traditional plastic toothbrushes. The other group viewed the same product endorsed by a recognized social media influencer. This setup allows for direct comparisons between the impacts of celebrity endorsements and influencer endorsements on the attitudes and purchase intentions of consumers. By analyzing the differences in consumer reactions to these two types of endorsements, the study aims to identify which endorsement strategy is more effective in promoting green products among the target demographics. The experimental conditions were carefully monitored to ensure that all participants were exposed

to the same product information and advertisement duration to maintain consistency across the study.

3.7 Measurement Instruments

The constructs in this study were measured using validated scales adapted to the context of green marketing and the specific products featured in the advertisements. For perceived similarity and wishful identification, items were adapted from Hoffner and Buchanan (2005), employing a 7-point Likert scale to gauge if participants agree or disagree with statements related to their feelings towards the endorsers. Perceived similarity was assessed through statements such as "[Name of endorser] thinks like me" and "[Name of endorser] behaves like me," aimed at measuring the cognitive and behavioral congruence between the participants and the endorsers. Wishful identification was assessed through questions like "[Name of endorser] is the type of person I want to be like myself" and "I'd like to do the kind of things [name endorser] does," which are designed to capture the aspirational aspects of the endorsers' influence. Green purchase intentions were measured through a series of questions adapted from prior studies by (Lin et al., 2023) focusing on participants' intent to purchase green products in the future.

Table 1: *Research Instruments*

Measure	Scale name	Subscales	Items
Endorser Familiarity			How familiar are you with the following celebrity/influencer?
Social Identification	Hoffner and Buchanan (2005)	Wishful Identification	A is the type of person I want to be like myself.

		Sometimes I wish I could be more like A.
		A is someone I would like to emulate.
		I'd like to do the kind of things A does.
McCroskey et al., (1975)	Perceived Similarity	A thinks like me.
		A behaves like me.
		A is like me.
		A is similar to me.
Green Purchase Intention	Lin et al. (2023)	I would like to try this product promoted by A.
		I would buy this product promoted by A if I happen to see the products in a store.
		I would actively seek out this product in a store in order to purchase it.

3.7.1 Measures of Endorser Familiarity

Endorser familiarity was assessed using an item on a 7-point Likert scale. The item simply asked participants "How familiar are you with the following celebrity/influencer?"

3.7.2 Measures of Social Identification

Wishful identification and perceived similarity were assessed using two subscales adapted from Hoffner and Buchanan's (2005) study, employing a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Wishful identification was gauged through four items: 'A is the type of person I want to be like myself,' 'Sometimes I wish I could be more like A,' 'A is someone I would like to emulate,' and 'I'd like to do the kind of things A does'. Perceived similarity will be gauged with four items: 'A thinks like me,' 'A behaves like me,' 'A is like me,' and 'A is similar to me'.

3.7.3 Measures of Purchase Intention

Participants' purchase intention was measured by evaluating them on 3 different statements adapted from a previous study (Lin et al., 2023), via a 7-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree). It involves questions like: "I would like to try this product promoted by A," "I would buy this product promoted by A, if I happen to see the products in a store" and "I would actively seek out this product in a store in order to purchase it."

3.8 Data Analysis

3.8.1 Descriptive Statistics

The demographic details of the participants, including age, gender, and education were described using descriptive statistics. This will give a summary of the sample and aid in deciphering the participant characteristics.

3.8.2 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis will be done to assess the measurement scales' internal consistency used in the study.

3.8.3 Moderated Mediation Analysis

SPSS software was used to analyze data, specifically employing the Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2018) for moderated mediation analysis. This advanced statistical tool, developed by is particularly well-suited for exploring complex models that include both mediating and moderating variables within a single analysis (Hayes, 2018). This tool is especially well-suited in case of dichotomous moderating variable (Borau et al., 2015), such as one used in current research. In this research, the PROCESS macro enabled moderated mediation analysis through the testing of direct and indirect effects of endorser type (celebrity vs. influencer) on green purchase intentions, while simultaneously assessing how these effects were mediated by perceived similarity and wishful identification, and moderated by endorser type. Moderated mediation, originally introduced by James and Brett (1984), explores how the strength of an indirect effect is affected by a third variable, known as the moderator. This occurs when the mediation effect of one variable on another is contingent upon the value of the moderator (Clement & Bradley-Garcia, 2022).

A 95% confidence level was used for all confidence intervals in the output, providing a standard threshold for determining statistical significance and ensuring a high degree of reliability in the findings. Additionally, to enhance the accuracy of the confidence intervals, especially given the complexity of moderated mediation analysis, 5000 bootstrap samples were used for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Reliability Analysis

Table 2: *Reliability analysis: Cronbach alphas for scales*

Scale	No.of items	Cronbach's alpha
Perceived Similarity	4	.907
Wishful Identification	4	.902
Green Purchase Intentions	3	.950

Cronbach's alpha was utilized to assess the scales' reliability in this study. As shown in Table 2, the Perceived Similarity scale, consisting of 4 questions, demonstrated excellent internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .907. Similarly, the Wishful Identification scale, also comprising 4 items, exhibited high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .902. The Green Purchase Intentions scale, which included 3 items, showed the highest reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .950. Acceptable alpha values typically range from 0.70 to 0.95 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). These values suggest that the scales used in this study are highly reliable and can be considered robust for measuring the respective constructs.

4.2 Demographics

Table 3: *Demographics*

Category	Sub-category	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	178	37.7
	Female	294	62.3
	Total	472	100.0
Age	17-23 years	238	50.4
	24-30 years	212	44.9
	31-37 years	22	4.7
Education	High school	6	1.3
	Vocational/ Associate Degree	2	.4
	Undergraduate	200	42.4
	Graduate	170	36.0
	Postgraduate	94	19.9

Table 3 shows the demographic data of the sample. A higher representation of females (62.3%) is found compared to males (37.7%). The majority of participants were aged between 17-23 years (50.4%) and 24-30 years (44.9%). In terms of education, most participants were undergraduates (42.4%) or graduates (36.0%).

4.3 Moderated Mediation Analysis

4.3.1 Moderation Analysis

Table 4: *Model Summary*

Variable	R	R-sq	F	P
Perceived Similarity	.2911	.0848	14.4456	.000
Wishful Identification	.4295	.1845	35.2907	.000

Table 4 presents a model summary that shows main effects of Endorser Familiarity and Endorsement Type as well as an interaction of these two variables on mediators Perceived Similarity and Wishful Identification. The p value is less than 0.05, meaning it is significant (Clement & Bradley-Garcia, 2022) and that there's a main and/or interaction of Endorsement Type on the relationship between Endorser Familiarity and Perceived Similarity and Wishful Identification. For Perceived Similarity, the correlation value indicates a moderate positive relationship with Endorser Familiarity and its interaction effect with Endorsement Type, as evidenced by an R value of .2911. The model explains 8.48% of the variance in Perceived Similarity (R^2 = .0848) and is statistically significant ($p < .001$). The small R^2 is suggestive of small variance, however, Dawson (2014) contends that R^2 is not suitable for quantifying the size of an interaction effect, as shared variance is inevitable between the independent and moderating variables. For Wishful Identification, the relationship with Endorser Familiarity and its interaction with Endorsement Type is stronger, with an R value of .4295. This model explains 18.45% of the variance in Wishful Identification (R^2 = .1845) and is also statistically significant ($p < .001$). These results indicate that endorser familiarity and/or its interaction with Endorsement Type significantly influences both Perceived Similarity and Wishful Identification with a notably stronger effect on Wishful Identification.

Table 5: *Interaction Effects of Endorser Familiarity and Endorsement Type on Perceived Similarity and Wishful Identification*

Variable		coeff	p	95% Confidence Interval	
				LLCI	ULCI
Perceived Similarity	Constant	1.9760	.000	1.4687	2.4833
	Endorser Familiarity	.1108	.089	-.0173	.2389
	Endorsement Type	-.7571	.027	-1.4289	-.0854
	Interaction effect (Endorser Familiarity * Endorsement Type)	.2855	.002	. 1074	.4636
Wishful Identification	Constant	1.7764	.000	1.2159	2.3369
	Endorser Familiarity	.2857	.000	.1442	.4272
	Endorsement Type	-1.0489	.006	-1.7911	-.3067
	Interaction effect (Endorser Familiarity * Endorsement Type)	.3747	.000	.1779	.5715

Table 5 explains which of the X and W variables contribute to the significant effect in this model, determined by if the p-value is below .05 and if the null of 0 does not fall between the confidence intervals for X and W (Borau et al., 2015; Clement & Bradley-Garcia, 2022). The results show no main effect of Endorser Familiarity on Perceived Similarity (coeff = .1108, p = .0899) indicating a partial support of H2a. However, direct effect of Endorser Type (coeff = -.7571, p = .0273) and interaction effects (coeff = .2855, p = .0017) on Perceived Similarity

are significant, suggesting that the type of endorser moderates the relationship between endorser familiarity and perceived similarity.

For Wishful Identification, Endorser Familiarity has a significant positive effect (coeff = .2857, p < .001), supporting H3a. Endorsement Type shows a significant negative effect (coeff = -1.0489, p = .0057), and the interaction effect between Endorser Familiarity and Endorsement Type is significant (coeff = .3747, p < .001), indicating that Endorsement Type also moderates the relationship between Endorser Familiarity and Wishful Identification.

The conditional effects indicate that Endorser Familiarity has a stronger impact on Wishful Identification for Social Media Influencer Marketing (β = 0.6604, SE = 0.0696, t = 9.4902, p < .001) compared to Celebrity Endorsement. This confirms that Social Media Influencer Marketing leads to greater Wishful Identification than Celebrity Endorsement, supporting H5.

Table 6: *Unconditional Interaction of Endorser Familiarity and Endorsement Type on Mediating Variables*

Mediating Variables	R2-chng	F	p
Perceived Similarity	.0194	9.9192	.0017
Wishful Identification	.0244	13.9987	.0002

Table 6 shows highest order unconditional interaction reflecting the variance in the interaction between Endorser Familiarity and Endorsement Type. Endorsement Type explains 1.94% and 2.44% of the variance in the interaction between Endorser Familiarity and mediator Perceived Similarity (R^2 = .01924, p=.0017) and Wishful Identification (R^2 = .0244, p=.0002). The p-value is below .05 and the null of 0 does not fall between the confidence intervals (Borau et al., 2015; Clement & Bradley-Garcia, 2022). It suggests that the association between

Endorser Familiarity and Perceived Similarity as well as that between Endorser Familiarity and Wishful Identification is moderated by Endorsement Type.

Table 7: *Conditional effects of the Endorser Familiarity and Endorsement Type on Mediating Variables*

Mediating Variable	Endorsement Type	coeff	p	95% Confidence Interval	
				LLCI	ULCI
Perceived Similarity	Celebrity Endorsement	.1108	.089	-.0173	.2389
	Social Media Influencer	.3963	.000	.2725	.5200
Wishful Identification	Celebrity Endorsement	.2857	.000	.1442	.4272
	Social Media Influencer	.6604	.000	.5236	.7971

Table 7 shows mediating variable and Endorser Familiarity vary according to Endorsement Type. For Perceived Similarity, there is no significant association when Endorsement Type is Celebrity Endorsement (coeff.=.1108, p=0.0899), as p value is greater than 0.05 and null of 0 falls between confidence intervals (Borau et al., 2015; Clement & Bradley-Garcia, 2022). In contrast, there is a significant effect of Endorser Familiarity and Perceived Similarity when the endorser type in Social Media Influencer (coeff.= .3963, p=0.0000). For Wishful Identification, however, all associations are significant for both endorsement types, but the correlation is stronger for Social Media Influencer (coeff.= . 6604, p=0.0000) than Celebrity Endorsement (coeff.= . 2857, p=0.0001). These findings suggest that

Endorser Familiarity more strongly influences Perceived Similarity and Wishful Identification in the context of Social Media Influencer than Celebrity Endorsements.

4.3.2 Mediation Analysis

Table 8: *Direct Effect of Endorser Familiarity on Green Purchase Intentions through Perceived Similarity and Wishful Identification*

Mediating Variable	R	R-sq	F	p
Perceived Similarity	.6499	.4223	171.4492	.000
Wishful Identification	.6506	.4233	172.0909	.000

Table 8 shows direct association between Endorser Familiarity and Green Purchase Intentions. When looking at the R-squared values, predictors Endorser Familiarity and Perceived Similarity explains 64.99% variance in Green Purchase Intentions (R^2 =.6499, p=.0000). Likewise, Endorser Familiarity and Wishful Identification explain 65.06% variance in Green Purchase Intentions (R^2 =.6506, p=.0000).

Table 9: *Indirect Effect of Endorser Familiarity on Green Purchase Intentions through Perceived Similarity and Wishful Identification*

Mediating Variable		coeff	p	95% Confidence Interval	
				LLCI	ULCI
Perceived Similarity	Constant	.5202	.004	.1673	.8731
	Endorser Familiarity	.2724	.000	.1837	.3611
	Perceived Similarity	.6929	.000	.6051	.7806
Wishful Identification	Constant	.8510	.000	.5128	1.1891
	Endorser Familiarity	.1513	.002	.0578	.2449
	Wishful Identification	.6255	.000	.5465	.7045

Table 9 displays the indirect effects of Endorser Familiarity on Green Purchase Intentions with Perceived Similarity and Wishful Identification. Endorser Familiarity significantly predicts Perceived Similarity (Coeff = .2724, p < .001). Moreover, Perceived Similarity itself strongly predicts Green Purchase Intentions (Coeff = .6929, p < .001).

For Wishful Identification, the effect is highly significant (Coeff = .8510, p < .001). Endorser Familiarity significantly predicts Wishful Identification (Coeff = .1513, p = .0016). Additionally, Wishful Identification strongly predicts Green Purchase Intentions (Coeff = .6255, p < .001). The indirect effects showed significant relationships between Endorser Familiarity and Green Purchase Intentions for both Perceived Similarity and Wishful Identification, confirming H1 that higher endorser familiarity leads to higher green purchase intentions.

4.3.3 Effect of Endorser Familiarity on Green Purchase Intentions

Table 10: *Direct Effect of Endorser Familiarity on Green Purchase Intentions*

Mediating Variables	Coeff	p	LLCI	ULCI
Perceived Similarity	.2724	.000	.1837	.3611
Wishful Identification	.1513	.002	.0578	.2449

Table 10 shows direct effect of Endorser Familiarity on Green Purchase Intentions. Effects are significant for both Perceived Similarity (Coeff = .2724, p < .001) and Wishful Identification (Coeff = .1513, p =.0016). Effect is stronger for Wishful Identification.

Table 11: *Conditional Indirect effect Endorser Familiarity on Green Purchase Intentions*

Mediating Variable	Endorsement type	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Perceived Similarity	Celebrity Endorsement	.0768	.0472	-.0162	.1697
	Social Media Influencer Marketing	.2745	.0497	.1816	.3762
Wishful Identification	Celebrity Endorsement	.1787	.0528	.0796	.2882
	Social Media Influencer Marketing	.4131	.0521	.3109	.5175

Table 11 summarizes the indirect effects of Endorser Familiarity on Green Purchase Intentions through mediators Perceived Similarity and Wishful Identification, differentiated by Endorsement Type: Social Media Influencer and Celebrity Endorsement. For the Perceived Similarity pathway, the indirect effect of Endorser Familiarity on Green Purchase Intentions is significant for Social Media Influencer (Effect = .2745, BootSE = .0497). This indicates that Perceived Similarity significantly mediates the relationship between Endorser Familiarity and Green Purchase Intentions in the context of Social Media Influencer, thus supporting H2b. The conditional effects show that Endorser Familiarity has a stronger impact on Perceived Similarity for Social Media Influencer Marketing ($\beta = 0.3963$, $p < .001$) compared to Celebrity Endorsement. This confirms that Social Media Influencer Marketing leads to greater Perceived Similarity than Celebrity Endorsement, confirming H3.

For the Wishful Identification pathway, the indirect effect of Endorser Familiarity on Green Purchase Intentions is significant for both endorsement types. This indicates Wishful Identification is a significant mediator, supporting H5. For Celebrity Endorsements, the effect

is significant (Effect = .1787, BootSE = .0528. For Social Media Influencer, the effect is stronger (Effect = .4131, BootSE = .0521, indicating a more substantial mediation effect through Wishful Identification when the endorsement is from a social media influencer.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Endorser Familiarity and Green Purchase Intentions

Hypothesis 1 (H1) proposed that endorser familiarity has a positive impact on green purchase intentions. The findings strongly support this hypothesis, indicating a significant direct association between endorser familiarity and Green Purchase Intentions. The acceptance of Hypothesis 1 aligns well with established literature trends which affirm the role of endorser familiarity in enhancing purchase intentions (Copeland et al., 2021; Frank & Mitsumoto, 2023; Ha & Lam, 2017; Ono & Ono, 2024, Schouten et al., 2020, Supriyanto et al., 2023). According to Belch and Belch (2001), familiarity encompasses recognition, popularity, and acceptance of a celebrity by consumers, which significantly elevates their intentions towards products endorsed by these celebrities. This effect is heightened by the mere exposure effect, where frequent exposure to a celebrity fosters a liking and trust that directly enhances purchase intentions. Moreover, familiarity enhances the attractiveness of a celebrity, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the advertisement (Amos et al., 2008). This suggests that not only does familiarity with endorsers increase likability but also boosts the persuasive power of marketing messages.

Under the framework of Social Identity Theory, this relationship can be understood through the concept of "ingroup favoritism," where consumers prefer and support products endorsed by familiar figures whom they see as part of their 'ingroup.' This is because familiar endorsers are more easily recognized and can be more readily associated with personal or communal values, leading to stronger trust and follow-through on their recommendations (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Endorsers who are well-known and trusted can significantly influence consumer behavior, as familiarity leads to easier recall and stronger association with

the endorsed messages (Till & Busler, 2013). This is particularly relevant in green marketing, where trust plays a crucial role in convincing consumers about the authenticity of the product's environmental claims (Chen, 2010).

5.2 Mediating Role of Perceived Similarity

Hypotheses 2a and 2b delve into the role of perceived similarity in mediating the relationship between endorser familiarity and green purchase intentions. While H2a found no significant direct impact of endorser familiarity on perceived similarity, H2b was supported, showing that perceived similarity significantly mediates the relationship between endorser familiarity and green purchase intentions when the endorsement type is considered, especially for social media influencers. This is aligned with the Social Identity Theory, which suggests that individuals are more likely to be influenced by those they perceive as similar to themselves, as this similarity fosters a sense of shared identity and trust (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). People relate more with social media influencers who appear to be similar to them, rather than celebrities (Schouten et al., 2020).

This study aligns with previous findings by Funder and Colvin (1988) and Hayes & Dunning (1997) that familiarity improves personality assessment agreement. Moreover, perceived similarity mediates the relationship between endorser familiarity and green purchase intentions, echoing Moreland and Zajonc's (1982) assertion that familiarity boosts similarity and attraction. These insights suggest that green marketing strategies should leverage familiar endorsers who resonate with the target audience to strengthen personal connections and purchase intentions.

The partial support for H2a can be interpreted through the prism of consumer skepticism in green marketing. Consumers often scrutinize green claims closely, and mere familiarity with an endorser might not automatically translate into perceived similarity unless specific attributes that resonate with the green context are evident (Matthes & Wonneberger,

2014). However, once a consumer perceives similarity with the endorser in terms of shared values, as seen in the significant mediation in H2b, this can strongly enhance green purchase intentions (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012).

5.3 Impact and Mediation of Wishful Identification

Hypotheses 3a and 3b focus on wishful identification and its relationship with endorser familiarity and Green Purchase Intentions. The findings confirm that Endorser Familiarity has a positive impact on Wishful Identification, and that Wishful Identification mediates the relationship between endorser familiarity and Green Purchase Intentions and that this mediation is moderated by endorsement type, with a stronger effect for social media influencer marketing. The acceptance of hypotheses H3a and H3b in this study resonates well with existing literature on the psychological mechanisms by which endorser familiarity influences consumer behaviors through the mediating role of wishful identification. The findings from Lim et al. (2020) provide a foundational understanding of how wishful identification, along with emotional engagement, plays a crucial role in enhancing behavioral loyalty through the development of parasocial relationships. This concept is particularly applicable to the current study's context, where wishful identification acts as a bridge connecting endorser familiarity with green purchase intentions. Such identification leads consumers to aspire towards or emulate the values and behaviors represented by the endorsers, thereby influencing their purchasing decisions.

In the lens of Social Identity Theory, Wishful Identification represents the desire of consumers to emulate admired figures within their chosen ingroups, enhancing their social identity. Influencers are regarded as role models on social media for their taste, lifestyle, and behaviors. People admire them and aspire to mimic or imitate them. As a result, when influencers promote prosocial behaviors online, their followers are likely to adopt these behaviors (Lou et al., 2024).

The stronger effect found with social media influencers can be attributed to perceived similarity. Since influencers are perceived as more similar to 'ordinary people' than celebrities, this perceived similarity can make it easier for people to identify with them aspirationally, as it is easier to believe they could be like them (Schouten et al., 2020). The parasocial interaction phenomena can also be a factor, where followers feel a sense of friendship and personal connection with influencers, unlike the distant admiration often held for traditional celebrities (Horton & Wohl, 1956). This connection enhances the effectiveness of influencers as mediators between endorser familiarity and Green Purchase Intentions through Wishful Identification, as demonstrated in the findings (Chung & Cho, 2017).

5.4 Moderation by Endorsement Type

Hypothesis 4 examined how the impact of endorser familiarity on perceived similarity is moderated by endorsement type, specifically comparing social media influencers and celebrities, while hypothesis 5 aimed to study the same on wishful identification. The hypotheses were supported, indicating that social media influencers have a stronger impact on perceived similarity and wishful identification and, by extension, on Green Purchase Intentions. This finding is consistent with recent studies that highlight the growing influence of social media influencers over traditional celebrities due to their ability to form more genuine connections with their audience (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Jin et al., 2019; Piehler et al., 2021; Schouten et al, 2020).

The theoretical underpinning for this moderation effect can be linked to the concept of source attractiveness which encompasses similarity, familiarity, and likeability (Erdogan, 1999). Social media influencers typically score higher on these attributes in the eyes of their followers compared to traditional celebrities, enhancing their ability to influence Green Purchase Intentions through mechanisms like perceived similarity and wishful identification (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

5.5 Theoretical Implications

While the influence of endorser familiarity on general purchase intentions has been well documented (Copeland et al., 2021; Ona & Ona, 2024), its specific impact on green purchase intentions had not been thoroughly investigated, particularly how this influence is mediated by social identification. This research specifically addresses how endorser familiarity impacts green purchase intentions through the mediation of Perceived Similarity and Wishful Identification. It highlights the psychological mechanisms—both cognitive and emotional—that consumers employ when processing information related to endorsers, thus providing a more nuanced understanding of consumer behavior in the context of green products.

Existing research, such as those by Schouten et al. (2020) and Kapoor et al. (2021), has broadly examined the effects of endorsements but lacked a focus on the specific mediators like Perceived Similarity and Wishful Identification within the pathway from endorser familiarity to green purchase intentions. By dissecting the role of Endorser Familiarity on Perceived Similarity and Wishful Identification, this study not only fills this gap but also expands the application of Social Identity Theory in marketing by explaining how these mediators shape green purchase intentions.

The nuanced relationship between endorser type (social media influencers vs. traditional celebrities) and its impact on social identification processes was underexplored, especially in the context of green marketing (Farivar & Wang, 2022; Yadav et al., 2024). This study clarifies that social media influencers, due to their perceived authenticity and closeness, have a stronger impact on both Perceived Similarity and Wishful Identification compared to traditional celebrities. It theorizes these findings within the framework of Social Identity Theory, suggesting a more dynamic model where external variables like endorser type can significantly influence the strength of identification and its effects on consumer behavior.

Global studies have provided insights into consumer behavior towards endorsements, but localized research in markets like Pakistan, considering unique cultural and market-specific factors, has been limited (Ashraf et al., 2023; Khan & Zaman, 2021). This study fills this gap by focusing on how different endorsement strategies impact green purchase intentions within the Pakistani context. It offers valuable insights for companies aiming to maximize their marketing strategies in a region experiencing a dynamic shift towards digital ecosystems and social media's growing influence on purchasing decisions.

By addressing these gaps, the research significantly contributes to the literature by providing a clearer and more detailed understanding of how endorsement strategies can be optimized for promoting green products, particularly in a culturally and commercially unique setting like Pakistan.

5.6 Practical Implications

Marketers should carefully select endorsers who are not only familiar but also align well with the target audience's values, especially in contexts requiring high trust, such as green marketing. The strong correlation between endorser familiarity and mediators like Perceived Similarity and Wishful Identification underscores the need for endorsers who can authentically represent the green credentials of the products they promote.

Given the effectiveness of social media influencers in enhancing both Perceived Similarity and Wishful Identification, brands should consider partnering with influencers who actively practice sustainability in their personal lives. These partnerships can be more credible and thus more effective in enhancing Green Purchase Intentions. Marketers can harness the power of social media platforms to create campaigns that highlight the personal stories of influencers with a genuine commitment to sustainability, thereby fostering greater consumer engagement and trust.

The interaction effects noted in the model suggest that the message and presentation style should be tailored according to the type of endorser. For social media influencers, messages that emphasize personal stories, authenticity, and a peer-like approach may be more effective. In contrast, celebrity endorsements might require a different strategy that leverages their aspirational status more than their relatability.

Since endorser effectiveness can vary with changes in public perception, continuous monitoring of how endorsers are viewed by the public is crucial. Brands should remain adaptable and ready to shift their endorsement strategies based on these dynamics to maintain credibility and effectiveness in their marketing efforts.

5.7 Limitations of the Study

The study predominantly focused on a specific demographic segment, mainly young adults, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other age groups or cultural contexts. Additionally, the sample showed a higher representation of females, which could influence the outcomes related to endorser effectiveness and identification processes.

The use of a cross-sectional design restricts the ability to infer causality between endorser familiarity and green purchase intentions. This design only captures a snapshot in time and may not adequately reflect the dynamic nature of consumer attitudes and behaviors over longer periods.

The classification of endorsement types into just two categories (social media influencers and celebrities) may oversimplify the spectrum of endorsement strategies available in the market. This binary classification does not account for other influential factors such as micro-influencers, industry experts, or grassroots activists who might also play significant roles in shaping green purchase intentions.

While the reliability of the scales used for perceived similarity, wishful identification, and green purchase intentions is high, the study relies heavily on self-reported measures, which are susceptible to social desirability bias and other forms of response bias.

5.8 Future Research Directions

Future research could employ longitudinal designs to track changes in consumer attitudes and behaviors over time. This approach would help in understanding the stability and fluctuation of endorser influence on green purchase intentions, particularly in response to evolving environmental concerns and endorsement strategies.

Further studies should consider a more diverse sample that includes different age groups, cultural backgrounds, and geographic locations. This would enhance the understanding of how cultural and demographic factors influence the relationship between endorser familiarity and green purchase intentions.

Researchers should explore the impact of various types of endorsers beyond the traditional celebrity and social media influencer dichotomy. This includes examining the roles of local community leaders, industry experts, and niche bloggers, who might resonate differently with different segments of the market.

Implementing experimental designs or using mixed-methods approaches could provide deeper insights into the causal relationships and underlying mechanisms between endorser familiarity and purchase intentions. Qualitative data could add a layer of depth to the understanding of consumer perceptions and emotional connections with endorsers.

Future research could also look into additional moderators such as consumer environmental concern or brand reputation that might influence the strength of the relationship between endorser familiarity and green purchase intentions. Exploring other mediators like trust in the endorser or the perceived authenticity of the endorsement could further elucidate the pathways through which endorsers impact consumer behavior.

Investigating the role of endorser-brand fit, especially in the context of green marketing, could provide valuable insights. The congruence between an endorser's public persona and the brand's environmental values might significantly affect the persuasiveness of the endorsement.

5.9 CONCLUSION

This research conclusively demonstrates that endorser familiarity significantly boosts green purchase intentions, underpinned by social identity theory's "ingroup favoritism." The findings underscore that consumers are more inclined to trust and follow the recommendations of endorsers familiar to them, which is especially crucial in green marketing where authenticity is key. The study further reveals that while the direct impact of endorser familiarity on perceived similarity is limited, its effect on green purchase intentions is significantly mediated by perceived similarity and wishful identification, particularly when the endorsers are social media influencers. These influencers, due to their relatability and perceived similarity to ordinary people, effectively enhance green purchase intentions through stronger wishful identification. Overall, the research highlights the critical roles of endorser type and the mediating effects of social identification processes in shaping effective green marketing strategies.

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APPENDIX

Google Forms Survey Questionnaire: Celebrity Endorser Condition

Role of Social Identification in Promoting Green Purchase Intention

Hello! My name is Momina Zafar, and I'm currently pursuing MBA at Bahria University, Islamabad. I'm excited to invite you to participate in my research study, which focuses on understanding the role of social identification in influencing green purchase intention.

By proceeding with this survey, you agree to participate voluntarily in our research study titled "Role of Social Identification in Promoting Green Purchase Intention." Your participation involves completing the survey questions to the best of your ability.

· The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

· Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

· Your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous, and will only be used for research purposes.

· There are no foreseeable physical or psychological risks associated with participating in this study.

If you have any questions or concerns about the survey or your participation, please feel free to contact me at mominazafar10@gmail.com.

Please indicate your informed consent to participate in this study.

Demographics

Please provide the following information about yourself.

Gender: Male/Female

Age

City

Education: High school, Vocational / Associate Degree, Undergraduate, Graduate, Postgraduate

Bamboo Organics - Hania Amir

A bamboo toothbrush is a toothbrush whose handle is made primarily from bamboo, a fast-growing and renewable resource. Bamboo toothbrushes are an eco-friendly alternative to traditional plastic toothbrushes, as they generate less plastic waste. They are biodegradable and come in compostable packaging, making them a more sustainable option for oral hygiene.

Please see the following advertisement for a bamboo toothbrush by Bamboo Organics - a store that sells green, eco-friendly products - recommended by Hania Amir.

Measure	Subscales	Items
Endorser Familiarity		How familiar are you with the following celebrity?
Social Identification	Wishful Identification	Hania Amir is the type of person I want to be like myself.
		Sometimes I wish I could be more like Hania Amir.
		Hania Amir is someone I would like to emulate.
		I'd like to do the kind of things Hania Amir does.
	Perceived Similarity	Hania Amir thinks like me.
		Hania Amir behaves like me.
		Hania Amir is like me.

		Hania Amir is similar to me.
Green Purchase Intention		I would like to try this product promoted by Hania Amir.
		I would buy this product promoted by Hania Amir if I happen to see the products in a store.
		I would actively seek out this product in a store in order to purchase it.

Google Forms Survey Questionnaire: Social Media Influencer Condition

Role of Social Identification in Promoting Green Purchase Intention

Hello! My name is Momina Zafar, and I'm currently pursuing MBA at Bahria University, Islamabad. I'm excited to invite you to participate in my research study, which focuses on understanding the role of social identification in influencing green purchase intention.

By proceeding with this survey, you agree to participate voluntarily in our research study titled "Role of Social Identification in Promoting Green Purchase Intention." Your participation involves completing the survey questions to the best of your ability.

· The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

· Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

· Your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous, and will only be used for research purposes.

· There are no foreseeable physical or psychological risks associated with participating in this study.

If you have any questions or concerns about the survey or your participation, please feel free to contact me at mominazafar10@gmail.com.

Please indicate your informed consent to participate in this study.

Demographics

Please provide the following information about yourself.

Gender

Age

City

Education

Sproutly – Zaid Ali

A bamboo toothbrush is a toothbrush whose handle is made primarily from bamboo, a fast-growing and renewable resource. Bamboo toothbrushes are an eco-friendly alternative to traditional plastic toothbrushes, as they generate less plastic waste. They are biodegradable and come in compostable packaging, making them a more sustainable option for oral hygiene.

Please see the following advertisement for a bamboo toothbrush by Sproutly - a store that sells green, eco-friendly products - recommended by Zaid Ali.

Measure	Subscales	Items
Endorser Familiarity		How familiar are you with the following influencer?
Social Identification	Wishful Identification	Zaid Ali is the type of person I want to be like myself.

		Sometimes I wish I could be more like Zaid Ali.
		Zaid Ali is someone I would like to emulate.
		I'd like to do the kind of things Zaid Ali does.
	Perceived Similarity	Zaid Ali thinks like me.
		Zaid Ali behaves like me.
		Zaid Ali is like me.
		Zaid Ali is similar to me.
Green Purchase Intention		I would like to try this product promoted by Zaid Ali.
		I would buy this product promoted by Zaid Ali if I happen to see the products in a store.
		I would actively seek out this product in a store in order to purchase it.

submission plag

14%
SIMILARITY INDEX

9%
INTERNET SOURCES

8%
PUBLICATIONS

6%
STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	www.researchgate.net Internet Source	2%
2	www.tandfonline.com Internet Source	1%
3	Submitted to Higher Education Commission Pakistan Student Paper	1%
4	Jialing Lin, Yubo Huang, Mengyao Li. "Enhancing Green Purchase Intentions: The Effects of Product Transformation Salience and Consumer Traceability Knowledge", Sustainability, 2023 Publication	<1%
5	Anastasios Panopoulos, Athanasios Poulis, Prokopis Theodoridis, Antonios Kalampakas. "Influencing Green Purchase Intention through Eco Labels and User-Generated Content", Sustainability, 2022 Publication	<1%
6	Submitted to Queen Mary and Westfield College	<1%