

Investigating the Impact of Celebrity Endorsement on Consumers' Purchase Intention towards Online Travel Service Industry in India

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ABSTRACT

The trend of associating with a celebrity for brand promotion has enraptured towards promoting tourism destinations. This paper tries to analyse the impact of celebrity endorsement as an efficient selling tool for on-line travel industry. The objectives framed to succeed in to the present goal were to spot whether or not the consumers take into account the tourism advertisements that are promoted by celebrities and to work out whether or not the employment of celebrities and its quality have a big impact on consumer's purchase intention. The survey was done on 268 respondents of Delhi-NCR through a structured questionnaire using convenience sampling. The statistical tools such as SPSS, one sample t-test and AMOS have been applied for hypothesis testing. One Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank test and Structural Equation modelling (SEM) is applied as a test of statistics. The outcomes of the study justified the application of TEARS model in tourism and online travel service industry in India. The foremost findings from the study were that the respondents solely get whole recognition and recall of the destination once the advertising is done by a celebrity endorser; it has been found that celebrity endorsers are more convincing and persuasive in better choice makings.

Keywords: Celebrity Endorsement, Tourism destination advertisements, Expertise, Trustworthiness, Expertise, Physical attractiveness, Similarity, Familiarity, Likeability, Match between the celebrity

INTRODUCTION

Having a superb product can alone not facilitate to vie in markets of high standards. Celebrity endorsement is one amongst the responses for various marketing issues. Celebrity Endorsement is one amongst the most important types of advertising within which an organisation makes use of known people or well-known organizations so as to spice up consumers' interest within the product and/or services that it requires to sell. Celebrity endorsement advertising has therefore become a vital part of the advertising strategy. Now a day, each company is making an attempt to herald a brand ambassador for its brand. A commercial that uses celebrity endorsers has high recognition among the shoppers. It helps the patron to recognise and recall the brand therefore influencing their purchasing intentions and buying decisions. Since celebrity endorsers creates associate degree elevated impact on purchase call of customers, producers and retailers invariably favour to pay a large quantity of cash to urge celebrities to endorse their merchandise and services. Some studies prove that the employment of acceptable celebrities facilitate establish the brand, helps to simply position a product within the world market and helps influence the acquisition intentions of customers.

In India celebrity endorsement is undefeated because of the perceptions of shoppers have the perception that if a brand is supported by a celebrity, then it's a superior quality because it is supported by a reputable source. India is a country wherever individuals are motivated by film stars, cricketers, politicians. The factors that have helped celebrity endorsement estimate well in India are familiarity and high responsibility towards the celebrity. The shoppers provide high value to the celebrities supported their experience in their own fields. The shoppers feel that if the brand offers high quality if it is supported by celebrities.

Celebrity Endorsement in Tourism Industry

There are range of various on-line travel service suppliers in India like Make My Trip, Yatra, Booking.com, Goibibo, Trip Advisors, to call a couple of. The basic nature of the online travel service industry need analysing the knowledge collected from numerous sources particularly the other customers' travel experience, individuals' own past travel experience along with marketer's-controlled data sources (Mangold, et al., 1999). The on-line travel service industry is finding it tough to usher in ability and differential among the services that are being publicised. Penetration into the market and gaining the notice of the shoppers has become a difficult one. In today's promotion world the shoppers are overfilled with promotional messages that they notice it tough to recollect the product or services provided by the various brands particularly tourism industry. A way out of this downside is to form effective use of celebrity endorser as researchers have conjointly known that celebrity endorsement will raise the next promotion ratings and products acceptance Phang G., Cyril E (n.d). A number of advantages of using favourite celebrities in advertising are that it helps to capture the eye of the audience, helps to make reliability towards the product advertised, helps to recall the advertised product easily, product recognition is simply achieved with the assistance of celebrity endorsement and helps to form a positive perspective towards the advertised tourist services.

A growing trend is being experienced in Indian on-line travel service sector wherever service suppliers have extensively used celebrity particularly the film stars as their ambassadors to determine believability with their merchants and users, be it in metropolitans, tier-III and rest of small Indian cities. The on-line travel service platform MMT is relying on Bollywood like Alia Bhatt, Ranvir Singh to beat its big competitors like GoIbibo, Yatra, Booking.com to realize the highest position. Salman Khan supported the Yatra's on-line app whereas Deepika Padukone were pitched in as brand ambassador for GoIbibo for sharing an equivalent objective of accelerating awareness, believability and promoting its services to a wider client audience.

The growing situation of pandemic Covid-19 has led to drastic reduction in Tourism sector. People are avoiding travelling physically outside. The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has caused vast revolution in tourism industry resulting in the modern generation of sightseeing as "Virtual Tourism" (VT). By important advancement of ICT, VT has developed to extend individuals accessibility to various tourism region information. VT may be a non-physical style of tourism that emerges in 3D world to integrate computing systems and human attitudes towards virtual and unreal travel (Sussmann & Vanhegan, 2000). VT utilizes the natural attractions to those that are unable to travel physically however want to experience different place (Huh & Singh, 2007).

This study tries to watch whether or not the celebrity endorsement has its impact in an exceedingly tourism industry, conjointly to assist alter or produce a destination image that a tourist or potential client can have on the destination that successively can produce an inclination to decide on the destination.

Review of Literature

D'Souza (2012) articles found a 15 percent annual increase of tourism in Gujarat after the endorsement done by Amitabh Bachchan for Gujarat Tourism promotion. It also reported the increase in West Bengal tourism was also reported with the help of promotion task done by Sharukh Khan. The article also talked about the positive impact of hiring brand ambassadors like Prachi Desai for Goa, Hema Malini in the Sparsh Ganga campaign, the badminton famous player Saina Nehwal for Andhra Pradesh and Preity Zinta for her homeland Himachal Pradesh. Hakimi et al. (2011) observed a strong association between the credibility, expertise, attractiveness and the endorser's match of a product with the endorsed product's brand image for Malaysian customers in apparels industry. Pandey (2011) also analysed that majority of the youngsters wanted to buy the products such as food, cosmetics, stationery items endorsed by female celebrities. Dzidrov (2010) also observed that the Chinese consumers perceived the advertisement done by celebrities as trustworthy and they preferred the television as the best source of tourism advertisements.

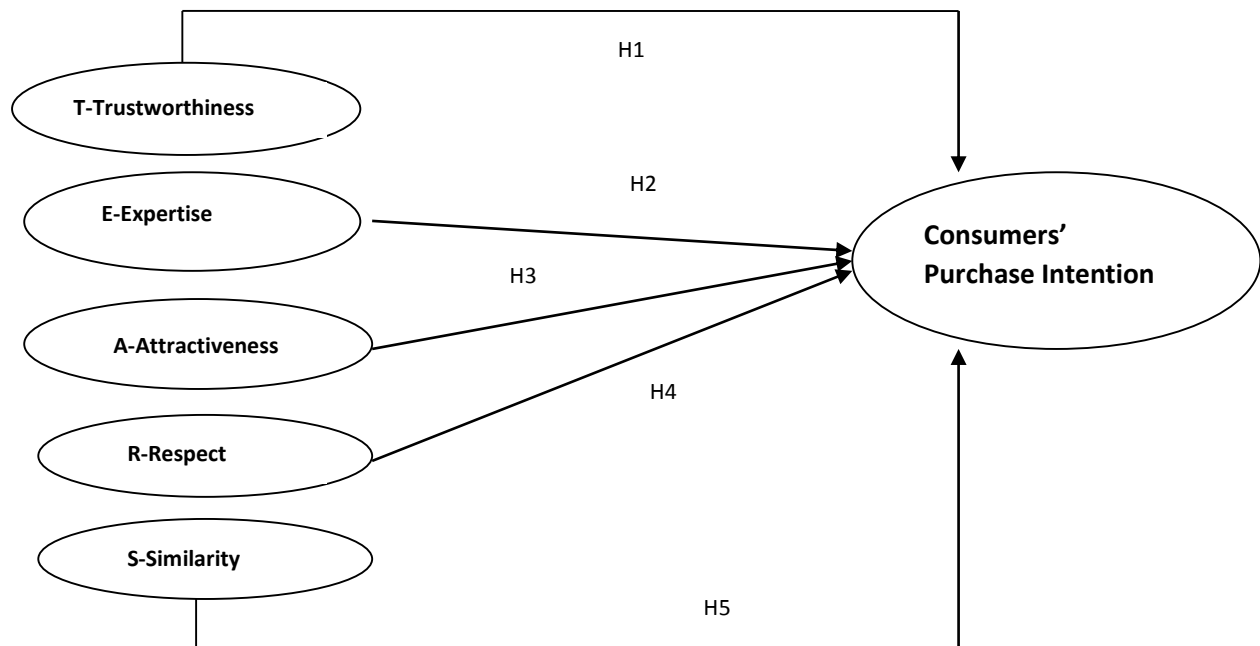
Van (2009) concluded that there should be a proper match between the celebrity endorsers and the target tourist destination for enhancing the credibility of the celebrity endorsement in promoting Hong Kong's tourism through print media.

Honeycutt and Cross (2008) study found that the celebrity endorsement is the one most effective way out of creating a difference from the clutters of multiple advertisements and promotional strategies used in the hospitality industry. They found that the consumers assumed the advertisements trustworthy if done by experienced celebrities. The celebrity's match to the product is the utmost requirement for getting better results. Zafar (n.d.) claimed that attractive and credible celebrity has significant impact on target consumers' brand perception and buying behaviour. Clow et al. (2011) concluded that for making a successful advertisement especially in service sector it is imperative to have an endorser's reliability with their expert opinion because of the intangible nature of services. The chosen celebrity must give the expert opinion of the promoted service in order to be considered trustworthy by the target audience.

Numerous researchers are there who have assessed the source credibility in various ways. Ohanion (1990) and Lafferty et al. (2002) evaluated the source credibility by taking three major dimensions such as trustworthiness, expectance and attractiveness. Arora, et al. (2006) and Clow et al. (2006) used several different parameters for measuring the source efficiency, such as credibility, attractiveness and liability. Shimp (2003) conducted a study that brilliantly elaborated the evaluation of efficacy of credibility of endorsed celebrity on the basis of two key traits, such as reputation and attractiveness, along with their various sub-attributes. He developed TEARS model for describing these sub-attributes namely trustworthiness and competence as components of credibility and physical beauty, respect and similarity to the target group as various components of attractiveness. Koththagoda & Weerasiri (2017) tested the TEARS model application in telecommunication industry of Sri Lanka and proved the existence of a relationship between the TEARS model's traits and the purchasing intention of the customer.

In addition, numerous studies have been conducted and studied in international contexts, however the observations of those studies aren't directly applicable in Indian perspective. In India, all major players of online travel service providers have been widely used celebrity endorsement as an effective brand promotional tool. They are investing heavily in nominating celebrities as the brand ambassadors in various promotional campaigns. However, it remains unknown and unproved in Indian context that how the concept of celebrity endorsement evolves and influence the purchasing intentions of tourists in the Indian online travel service industry.

At this platform, the researcher gives its acknowledgement that while it is profitable for an establishment to use the correct celebrity match for better product/service ads as customers generally seems showing their willingness to purchase the celebrity-endorsed products/services. But the same has still not been proved in the online travel service industry of India. This study has a target to fulfil this significant gap in this important domain and wants to analyse the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement with the help of TEARS model on the buying intentions of Indian customers for the use of online travel services. The study also aims to identify the trait of TEARS model that most influences Indian customers' travel services buying intentions. Figure 1 provides the layout of the current study's proposed model:



Methodology

Objectives of the study

- To analyse the impact of credibility of celebrity advertisements on consumers’ purchase intentions in tourism sector.
- To determine whether customers get attracted, recognise and recall the destination if endorsed by celebrity endorsement.

The present study is descriptive and exploratory in nature because it aims to analyse the impact of celebrity endorsement on on-line travel service buying intentions of customers. The study uses the tested five dimensions of TEARS model, including trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, respect and similarity. In order to envision the implementation of the chosen model in an exceedingly comparatively undiscovered service class, i.e., tourism, the analysis relied heavily on primary information. Primary information was collected with the assistance of structured questionnaire. It was divided into 2 sections such as the first section deals with demographic information of the respondents and the second section relates to the opinions of the respondents on celebrity endorsement in tourism services. Its content was discussed and approved by educational and industrial sector experts. The Secondary information was collected from journals, books, newspapers etc. With ninety respondents, the form was pre-tested and modified on the basis of required changes. The digital mode of distribution i.e., google form was prepared and mailed for data collection from 268 respondents belonging to several age groups, occupation, education and income levels across Delhi- NCR by convenience sampling method (non-probabilistic sampling method).

Analysis results and findings:

H1: The consumers’ purchase intention towards online travel services is influenced by the trustworthiness of a celebrity endorser

H2: The consumers’ purchase intention towards online travel services is influenced by the expertise of a celebrity endorser

H3: The consumers’ purchase intention towards online travel services is influenced by the attractiveness of a celebrity endorser

H4: The consumers’ purchase intention towards online travel services is influenced by the respect of a celebrity endorser

H5: The consumers’ purchase intention towards online travel services is influenced by the similarity of a celebrity endorser

H6: Celebrity endorsement has its impact on consumers’ purchase intention for tourism destination and online travel services.

H6 (a): Destination becomes attractive for consumers if endorsed by a celebrity.

H6 (b): Destination can be easily recognised and recalled by consumers if endorsed by a celebrity.

H6 (c): Tourism service details are identified by the consumers if the service is endorsed by a celebrity.

H6 (d): Consumer visits the destination when endorsed by a celebrity

Table 1: Respondents’ Profile

Variable	Categories	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%) of Respondents
Gender	Male	142	53
	Female	126	47
Age	Less than 18 years	26	10
	18-29 years	128	48
	30-44 years	83	31
	45-59 years	24	9
	60 years & above	7	3
Income	Below 10,000	68	25
	10,000-30,000	36	13
	30,001-50,000	56	21
	50,001-1 Lac	69	26
	Above 1 La	39	15
Education	Undergraduate	98	37
	Diploma	12	4
	Graduate	68	25
	Post Graduate	83	31
	Other	7	3
Occupation	Student	108	40
	Professional	52	19
	Business	30	11
	Service	68	25
	House Maker	10	4

Table 1 indicates that the sample consisted of 53% of male respondents, whereas the female respondents were 47%. The major portion of respondents (48%) belonged to the 18-29 age bracket, followed by 31% in the 30-44 age bracket. Student respondents were 40% whereas 25% of the respondents has service as their occupation. The 19% and 4% of the respondents represented professional and house maker categories. 26% of the sample was from the monthly income group of Rs. 50,001 to 1 Lac rupees, 25 percent of respondents belonged to the income group below 10,000 rupees.

The scale dimensions were also checked for its reliability and validity. The material validity was assured by adopting a well-established scale and regular suggestions of the guide and co-guide. The Fornell-Larcker (1981) criteria was used to test the discriminant validity during which every construct's root of AVE was found to be higher than its inter-construct correlations (Table 3). To check the relevancy of the TEARS model, the Keiser-Meyer-Olkin (.843, vital at .05 significance level) and Bartlett's test of sphericity (significant at .05 significance level) were performed. Exploratory factor analysis was used to check the factor loadings of all scale items. All six scale items were loaded as planned and explained 75% of the variance. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was calculated severally for all constructs together with the factor loading analysis of all items. The factor loadings for all the dimensions were found higher than the preferred cut off values of 0.6. The AVE value for each scale items were observed higher than the suggested value of 5 (Farrell, 2010). The reliability of scale was also verified with the help of Cronbach's alpha (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) and its value was found higher than 0.7. The table 2 below depicts the scale's reliability and validity.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity of the Scale

Construct	Statements	Factor Loadings	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
Trustworthiness (T)	T1: I trust the recommendation given by the celebrity for tourism services	.84	.936	.932	.757
	T2: Celebrities in ads show their true interest towards the tourism services.	.89			
	T3: Celebrities provide true statements for endorsed tourism services.	.86			
Expertise (E)	E1: Celebrities provide their expert opinion in tourism service ads.	.93	.949	.856	.873
	E2: Celebrities endorse only those tourism services which are genuine as per their opinion.	.97			
	E3: I consider expertise of celebrity as impactful when making a buying decision for tourism services	.90			
Attractiveness (A)	A1: I find tourism services attractive if endorsed by celebrity.	.86	.931	.919	.752
	A2: Ads with beautiful/handsome celebrity have high recalling power for me.	.88			
	A3: Celebrity with good looks is more influential in promoting online travel services to me.	.82			
Respect (R)	R1: I would like to avail services of online travel service provider just because the celebrities are associated with it.	.89	.911	.928	.659
	R2: I like to use tourism services of my role model celebrity.	.77			
	R3: I show my respect for celebrities by availing tourism services endorsed by them.	.81			
Similarity (S)	S1: I find celebrity of my age group more influencing in endorsing tourism services	.87	.859	.935	.628

	S2: I feel connected with the celebrity by using the tourism services endorsed by him.	.82			
	S3: I always compare the product I have with the product that celebrities are endorsing.	.77			
Purchase Intentions (PI)	P1: I would like to avail the services of such online travel service supplier if my favourite celebrity is endorsing it.	.87	.910	.943	.784
	P2: I remember an online travel service just because the celebrity is endorsing it.	.91			
	P3: I believe online travel service providers are able to sell their services by using celebrity endorsement.	.85			

Table 3: Discriminant Validity of the Scale

	Trustworthiness	Expertise	Attractiveness	Respect	Similarity	Purchase Intentions
Trustworthiness	.889					
Expertise	.642	.948				
Attractiveness	.692	.579	.867			
Respect	.734	.659	.729	.842		
Similarity	.721	.781	.595	.679	.814	
Purchase Intentions	.665	.691	.659	.691	.768	.881

Note: The diagonal bold elements are the square roots of AVEs whereas non-diagonal elements represent the latent correlations.

Findings of the Study

All the constructs of the conceptual model were analysed with the help of descriptive statistics. One sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank was checked at 5 % significance level as a test statistic as the analysed data was assumed to be not normal. The descriptive statistics for the various constructs of the model are given in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics

Construct	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test	Significance
Trustworthiness (T)	268	4.31	1.24	One Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.001
Expertise (E)	268	3.91	1.10		.000
Attractiveness (A)	268	4.52	1.32		.003
Respect (R)	268	3.37	1.15		.000
Similarity (S)	268	3.88	1.19		.000
Purchase Intentions (PI)	268	3.71	1.21		.000
The significance level is .05.					

In above-mentioned Table 4 it can be inferred that each and every construct of the proposed model were preferred higher than their mean value (i.e., 3) by the respondents and they considered them important at a 5 percent significance level for each construct test. Attractiveness (A) was identified with the maximum mean value of 4.52 (.003 sig.). It was followed by Trustworthiness having mean value of 4.31 (.001 sig.) and Expertise with mean value of 3.91 (.000 sig.).

The important findings for all the constructs of the projected model suggested that celebrity endorsement was regarded as trustworthy and appealing by respondents. It was claimed that celebrities have their expert opinion in the online travel services which plays a crucial role in consumers’ purchasing decisions. They conjointly felt that the getting of on-line travel services supported by celebrities was the way to show appreciation for celebrities.

The majority of respondents are in consensus that they feel connected with their favourite celebrities and conjointly feel a way of similarity with celebrities by availing the celebrities' endorsed online travel services. They were more likely to recall the online travel services which are endorsed by their beloved celebrities. Respondents preferred to buy celebrity's endorsed services of online travel service provider.

The researcher tests the fit of the research projected model by using structural equation modelling in the Indian tourism and online travel service industry whose multiple fit indices suggested measures are given below in Table 5. The proposed source credibility model was found fit with a CMIN/DF value of 2.073, below than the proposed value of 3 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) also shown the suitable fitness of the model with the result value of .039 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). Other remaining model indices have also been found higher than .9.

Table 5: Model Fit Indices

Index	Structural Model Value	Recommended Value
CMIN/DF	2.073	≤ 3
NFI	.904	≥ .80
RFI	.925	≥ .90
IFI	.921	≥ .90
TLI	.932	≥ .90
CFI	.943	≥ .90
RMSEA	.039	≤ .10

In the following Figure 2, it has been found as a result of the theoretical model that all five components of celebrity's credibility's have its substantial impact on the purchase intention of the consumers in the Indian online travel service group and they together accounted for 53 % (.000 sig.) of the variance in consumers' purchase intentions. This justified the acceptance of all the present analysis hypotheses (namely H1, H2, H3 H4 and H5). The highest variance (58 %, .001 sig.), observed in the celebrity attraction, was followed by trustworthiness trait of celebrity (56 %, .001 sig.). The celebrity's expertise explained the 51 % (.000 sig.) variance, 45 percent (.001, sig.) and 46 percent (.000, sig.) of the variance in the purchase intentions of consumers were explained by similarity and respect traits of celebrity's source credibility. The total 53% (.000 sig.) of the consumers' purchase intention variance was explained by all 5 traits of source credibility of celebrities.

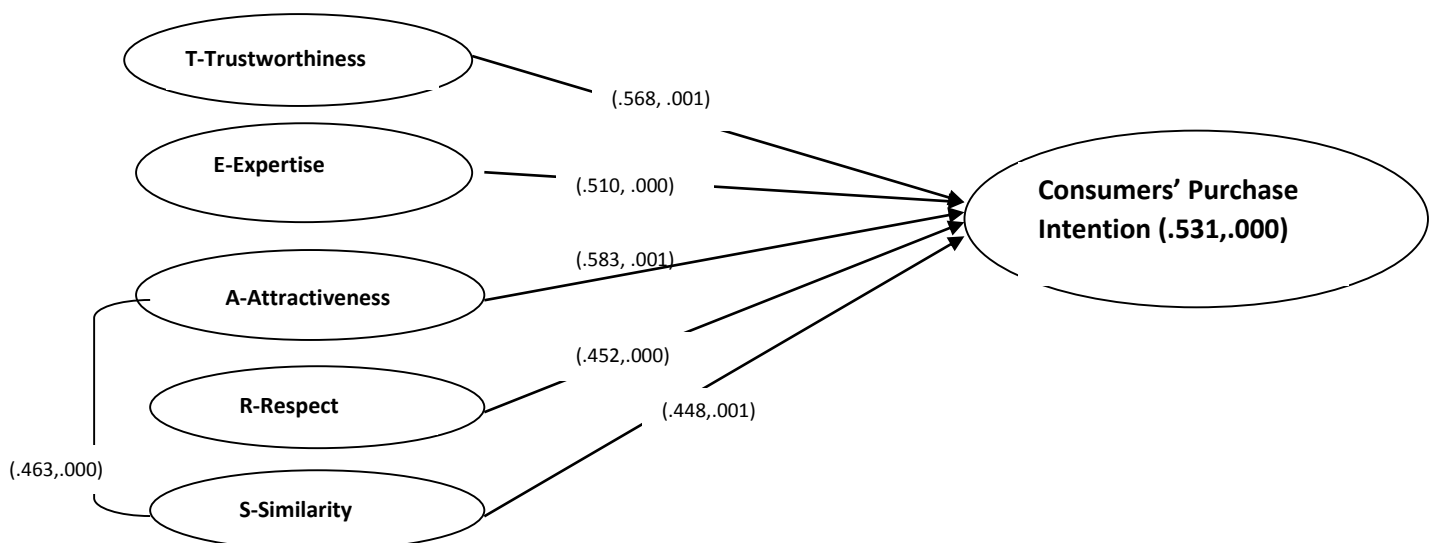


Figure 2: Results of Proposed Model

The model additionally suggested the inter-construct covariance of 46 percent between attraction and similarity traits of source credibility collectively (.000 sig.). Thus, it can be interpreted that the higher the attractiveness of the celebrity are additionally resembling the celebrity viewed by the customers.

The study's findings were in consensus with established literature, particularly one that deals with the application of the TEARS model in different products' categories. Like Gupta et al. (2015) observed that trustworthiness and attractiveness influenced strongly the consumer's intent to buy endorsed merchandise. Koththagoda and Weerasiri (2017) additionally noted that endorser's traits like attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise and respect have a strong association with the consumer's buying intention in the service sector. Stafford et al. (2002) also observed in their report that consumers may trust the selection of the celebrity for purchasing the fun services.

Table6. Descriptive statistics and one sample t test result of opinions of celebrity endorsements t value p value

			T value	P value
I am attracted to a destination that has a familiar face in its Ad	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.63	-2.454	0.001
	σ	1.143		
I can more promptly recognise and recall a destination that has a celebrity in its Ad	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.46	-6.194	0.000
		1.101		
	σ			
I pay more attention to tourism product details if it is endorsed by a celebrity	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.84	-0.954	0.105
	σ	1.185		
I visit places that have been endorsed by celebrities	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.02	1.346	0.115
	σ	1.098		

The above table 6 is showing the results of One sample t test which was used for the last hypothesis testing related to the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumers' perception and buying behaviour for online travel services. The p value for first two statements were valued 0.001 and 0.000 indicating the rejection of null hypothesis as they were smaller than 0.05. So, the conclusion is that the consumers can get interested to a destination and recognise and recall a destination easily if endorsed by a celebrity.

It was also found that p values of the statement 3 and 4 were 0.105 and 0.115 higher than 0.05, indicating the acceptance of the null hypothesis which shows that the consumers would not pay a lot of attention to the product details and do not usually visit the destination just because it is endorsed by celebrity.

CONCLUSION

Advertisers used celebrity endorsements for brand differentiation and positioning of their merchandise in the market apart from their competitors. This has become a trend currently for creating direct and strong awareness of their good with the help of celebrity endorsement for showcasing their own distinctive selling propositions against their competitors. This study provides an understanding of the effect of celebrity endorsement on tourists in selecting tourism destination or online travel service providers. The results of the current research suggest that celebrity endorsement helps to herald awareness for the destination, make recognise and recall the place easily by creating an association with the celebrity. The research observed the significant effect of celebrity endorsement on tourists' purchasing intentions in the Indian online travel service market. Consumers considered online travel services endorsed by celebrities as trustworthy, respectable and attractive. They conjointly feel a kind of link with celebrities promoting the online travel services. Though, it ought to be understood that celebrity endorsement helps to develop awareness but need not directly convert the awareness into visiting the place or buying the endorsed travel services by consumers. As a resultant of the study, it can be said that Celebrity endorsement could facilitate the consumer to filter to filter decisions from the too several destinations he has in mind to go to.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study aimed to investigate the impact of credibility of celebrity endorser on consumers' buying intentions for online travel services. The present study observed that the celebrity endorsement acts an important role in the Indian tourism service industry, that fall in the category of limited problem solving group, and all credibility's traits such as, trustworthiness, expertise, attraction, respect and similarity have their influence in changing the purchase intentions significantly. However, it has also been noted, that the celebrity's credibility was able to explain just half of the variance in consumers' purchasing intentions for tourism services. It can be concluded from the analysis results that though the celebrity's credibility is regarded as trustworthy, desirable and respectable by the respondents, it does not has a vital effect on purchasing intentions. The finding results can be better analysed by taking into considerations the factors which are generally considered by the respondents for selecting an online travel services provider such as payment protection, picture of the service provider, offered facilities by service providers, etc.

The products which involve less participation, hiring celebrities for brand promotion particularly to capitalize on their mass popularity may prove fruitful, however such similar outcomes are hard to observe in the case of limited or extended problem solving category products such as tourism and banking. The marketers are investing in billions on celebrity endorsement, so it is suggested for them to associate with the perfect celebrity match for taking their maximum benefits and analyse their outcomes in economic parameters. One major observation from the current study is that a mix of celebrities, distinctive attributes of the destination and reviews with some experienced tourists would help the marketers in converting the awareness of consumers to visiting the destination. The study used TEARS model and confirmed its validation in online travel service industry in India in which not much research has been done so far in past.

LIMITATIONS

Such studies suffer from various disadvantages, and this analysis is no more exception. Due to the proven results of the existence literature, the TEARS model was selected for this analysis. Another exploratory analysis could reveal another experimented model that may offer better results in the concerned area. The present research has seen the application of TEARS model in online tourism only and its generalizability will solely be outlined by evaluating its leads to different similar services classes. The study concluded that celebrity endorsement has its influence in promoting online travel services. However, it could not be determined that respondents influenced by the celebrity endorsement actually used the services of online travel service providers. In other terms, only purchase intentions rather than actual actions were studied. Sample size, time involvement, location and effort constraints also held proven to be true for this analysis.

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