Social Influencer or Celebrity Endorser, To Whom Do Multicultural Consumers Pay Attention in Instagram? Comparing Medium- and High-Involvement Products Across Ethnic Groups

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This study investigates the influence of social media influencers and celebrity endorsements on attitudes and intentions to purchase high and medium-involvement products on Instagram. A multimethod research design was used, with a national sample of 799 Instagram users. Results show that celebrity endorsements are more impactful than social media influencers for High and medium-involvement products. However, social media influencers influence more males, but attitudes remain consistent across genders. Celebrity endorsements and influencers have the highest impact on Millennials. The study reveals that celebrities are more influential than celebrity endorsements for medium-involvement products. There are significant gender and age differences but no ethnic differences. Males are more influenced by celebrities and influencers on Instagram, but their attitude toward influencers remains consistent. Celebrity endorsement and influencers have the highest impact on Millennials, followed by Gen X, baby boomers, and Gen Z, with no significant difference between Gen Z and baby boomers.

Keywords: celebrity endorsement, social media influencers, multicultural consumers, ethnicity, age, gender

INTRODUCTION

The rise and proliferation of social media platforms led to new businesses and marketing opportunities. With over 3.6 billion social media users and platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, TikTok, and Tumblr, the marketing landscape is changing with the global spread of new social media platforms (Statista, 2020). Over 75 percent of social media consumers are influenced by these digital channels when making purchase decisions (i.e., Barker, 2017; Vinerean et al., 2013; Stephen, 2016). The influx of digital advertising has led to the inception of a new form of endorser known as social media influencers. That indicates that traditional celebrities are no longer the only key players in endorsing. Brand endorsement by social media influencers is significantly impacting consumer purchase intentions (i.e., Cuevas, Chong & Lim, 2020; Lim et al., 2017; Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). Although current research has considered the role of both celebrity and social media influencers, there is a gap in research comparing their impact on multi-ethnic and multicultural groups of consumers.

Influencer marketing represents a $10 billion industry in the US, and Instagram is the preferred social media platform (Haenlein et al., 2020). However, empirical research is scarce concerning social media influencers' impact across cultural groups (Zeren & Gökdağlı, 2020). On the other hand, enough evidence confirms that celebrity endorsement is effective in consumer decision-making. Factors such as cultural orientation and ethnic characteristics shape consumers' inclination toward a celebrity (i.e., Ladhari, R., Massa, E., & Skandrani, H. 2020; Halter, 2000;). Yet, little evidence exists about attitudes toward social media influencers across ethnic groups. While minorities become the majority in the US demographics, it is imperative to explore to what extent influencers versus traditional celebrities can influence consumers from different ethnicities. Thus, a study that compares the effect of both celebrities' and influencers' endorsement across ethnic groups is needed.

Nevertheless, despite the ethnic identification, the product category being endorsed relates to what extent the consumer is affected by endorsers (i.e. Keel & Nataraajan, 2012; Zaichkowsky, 1985). In addition, consumer responses to a message received by the endorsers will vary by the age group of the consumers (i.e., Roy, Guha & Biswas, 2015). For instance, Millennials (i.e., Cooley & Yancy, 2019) and Gen Z consumers (Ellison et al., 2017) are highly inclined toward celebrity endorsement when making purchase decisions. Lastly, differences in celebrity endorsement are unknown to vary by age cohorts (Paramita & Septianto, 2021) and gender (Klaus & Bailey, 2008; Edward, 2009). Therefore, this study explores the impact of social media influencers versus celebrity endorsements on consumers' intention to purchase products categorized as a high and medium level of involvement across ethnicities, age groups, and genders.

In addition, when it comes to platforms using influencers to increase consumers' brand engagement and shopping behavior, Instagram has been in the lead (Zeren & Gökdağlı, 2020). Not surprisingly, several publications analyzed influencers' impact on Instagram (i.e., Neal, 2017; De Veirman et al., 2017). For example, a recent study in India showed a comparative analysis revealing that celebrities are more effective endorsers than social media influencers (Zeren& Gökdağlı, 2020). Although this is a relevant contribution to the discipline, the latter study was conducted in the country with the highest level of power distance, where attributes related to power and status are preferred (Zeren& Gökdağlı, 2020). This development inspires and supports the need for more empirical research exploring the impact of traditional celebrities and social media influencers in a different environment.

Therefore, this study explores the impact that social media influencers and celebrity endorsements on Instagram have on consumer's intention to purchase a high and medium level of involvement products across ethnicities, age groups, and genders. Specifically, this study explores the effect of celebrity versus social media influencers on Instagram by testing group differences among Non-Hispanic White, Hispanic, African American, and Asian consumers while comparing age groups and gender. Regarding hypotheses building, the theories of Ethnicity, Involvement, Attitude formation, and Parasocial relationships are utilized to understand and contrast the role of social media influencers and celebrity endorsement on two different product types (Medium- and high-involvement) and across groups.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Influencer Versus Celebrity Endorsement

Marketing practitioners introduced social media influencers in the early 2010s at various bloggers' conferences (i.e., Hispanicized). The social media influencers, or bloggers as they used to call themselves, are seemingly regular people who can better connect with the average consumer (Hermanda et al., 2019). Social Media influencers promote the brand by spreading an online message (De Veirman et al., 2017) and engaging in sponsored posts (Campbell & Grimm, 2019). This practice allows influencers to receive a payment for their shared messages across platforms (Kay et al., 2020). In other words, social-media influencers are defined as opinion leaders in social media who communicate their messages to a mass audience (Gräve, 2017) and are perceived as "trusted tastemakers [s] in one or several niches" (DeVeirman et al., 2017, p. 798). Social media influencers can tap into niche markets and reach a different and smaller stratum of people who share similar interests (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). Beauty guru Aaliyah Jay and

comedian Jay Versace are two popular influencers on Instagram. Influencers exist in all segments and product categories, including health and fitness, fashion and beauty, food, technology, and more.

On the other hand, traditional celebrities are individuals who have gained their fame outside of social media through their talents and careers (Erdogan, 2010). As a result, celebrities can secure high recall rates as endorsers and have attractive qualities that can be transferred onto the endorsing brand (Trivedi, 2018). Rihanna and Beyoncé, who both shot to fame through their singing careers, are classic examples of traditional celebrities. Other typical examples of celebrities can be athletes such as Tiger Woods and Michael Jordan, whose popularity allotted them high endorsing demands two decades ago. McCracken (1989) defines a traditional celebrity endorser as "Any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement" (p.310).

Recently, there has been an unprecedented influx of endorsements on social media, and the lines between traditional celebrities and social media influencers seem unclear. Celebrities have been endorsing products for decades now, whereas influencers have hugely increased in the last decade. As social media continues to thrive with new platforms cropping up, the number of consumers increases exponentially. For example, it is reported that 190 million users are logged into Instagram regularly in the United States alone (Statista, 2020). Therefore, research comparing both influencers' and celebrities' effects on new media is needed.

Endorsement and Intention to Purchase

The use of celebrity endorsement in advertising is not a new phenomenon but has become increasingly widespread over the last 20 years (Fleck et al., 2012), especially in social media. There are multiple reasons why a company hires a celebrity, or now an influencer, to be the brand's ambassador. First, celebrity endorsement significantly impacts consumers' purchase intentions, particularly when they view the endorser positively (McCormick, 2016; Audrezet et al., 2020). Celebrities aid in building a brand narrative and strengthening brand image (Ahmad et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2018).

Endorsement is then utilized to enhance brand image and consumer trustworthiness (Ahmad, et al.,2019). In addition, the endorsement is used because it increases product recognition and brand recall (Atkin & Block, 1983; McCracken, 1989). Not surprisingly, celebrities are often hand-picked because of their attractiveness and perceived effectiveness in influencing consumer purchasing decisions (Fleck et al.,2012).

Product Involvement and Relatability

The concept of product involvement has been a significant center of discussion in consumer behavior literature for the past decades, having different characteristics identified in its conceptualization (Rothschild, 1984; Edward et al., 1992; Richins & Bloch, 1986). Nevertheless, product involvement commonly refers to a consumer's perceived relevance of the product to one's needs, values, and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Other characteristics connected to product involvement are those proposed by Rothschild (1984), who states that a set of motivation, arousal, or interest exists in product involvement. The revised Product Involvement Inventory (PII) contains two separate sub-scales that measure two facets of consumer involvement: perceived importance and interest (Edward et al., 1992). However, price perceptions also mediate product involvement (Ferreira et al., 2015), which correlates with risk perception (Dholakia, 2001).

Product involvement is essential because it impacts consumers' cognitive and behavioral responses to marketing stimuli (Laaksonen, 1994). Therefore, a customer may look at highly involved items more extensively in the search process because the investment is high risk (Dholakia, 1997). Since the corresponding value is high, the consumer would perceive the product to possess more attributes. To ensure the attainment of value for one's money, the consumer would likely engage in more research to understand and familiarize himself with the entire product and its offered features. For instance, an individual intending to purchase a luxury car will likely be highly engaged in decision-making. Consumers often indulge in luxury consumption for its associated society recognition, brand prestige, features, and material quality, uniqueness, and as an expression of self (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014).

On the other hand, consumers searching for a low product involvement item rely more on salient cues such as price and brand familiarity (Nkwocha et al., 2005). This type of customer does not spend nearly as much time researching the product intended for purchase, and their cognitive processing level is low or zero. Product level of involvement depends on many attributes, and "it is generally concluded that highly involved consumers search more for product attributes and make more product comparisons" (Eryigit, 2013).

Since the product involvement level is defined as the degree of relevance and importance, it might have for a consumer, their propensity level accounts for merits and demerits when consumers make the purchase (i.e., Te'eni-Harari & Hornik, 2010; Erygit, 2013). As a result, it underscores the degree of investment and thought processing put into the decision-making process regarding a specific product type (Tizazu, 2018). Thus, products can be grouped by their level of importance for a consumer, such as high, medium, and low involvement (Zaichkowsky, 1986). For example, convertible cars, jewelry, and diamond-encrusted watches might be considered high-involvement products. There is a heavy investment involved on the consumer's part when the product is usually not on sale or at a discount. Hence, high-involvement products typically have a high price tag attached and are very high risk (Mowzer, 2016).

On the other hand, consumers can purchase lower involvement products without much thought, and their corresponding decision-making processes are brief and sometimes non-existent (Petty et al., 1983; Zaichkowsky, 1985). Therefore, most impulse buys are usually in low-involvement products ((Tizazu, 2018), like fast-moving consumer goods such as paper towels or milk. Products requiring slightly more cognitive consideration would then be considered medium-level products, falling somewhere between the two categories (Tizazu, 2018; Petty et al., 1983). Consumers' demographics and socio-economic status determine which products would be high in involvement and which would be low (Tanner & Raymond, 2012). Because low-involvement products require a minimum cognitive search process in consumer decision-making, medium and high-involvement products focus on this study. While high-involvement products often require extensive research and evaluation, medium-involvement products may not warrant the same level of scrutiny. Therefore, consumers' intentions to purchase may be influenced differently when it comes to attitudes toward celebrities versus social media influencers. Understanding the impact of these two influential figures is crucial in determining effective marketing strategies for each product category.

Culture and Ethnicity on Endorsements

Social media influencers can integrate culture into online engagement with different ethnic consumers, strengthening their relationships and benefiting all stakeholders (Quarasse & Van de Vijver, 2004). In this case, a strong identity salience is invoked in online ethnic communities when interacting with culturally framed content, influencing consumers' product choices and intention to purchase (Chattaraman et al., 2010). As the US is now significantly multicultural, it is pertinent to account for the diverse ethno-scape of social media. Ethnicity is defined as individuals' self-identification or affiliation with a group of people based on their cultural association, origin, and heritage (Mueller, 2008; Deshpande & Stayman, 1994). There are four main ethnic groups in the US: non-Hispanic Whites, Hispanic, Black, and Asian. The literature supports the claim that media consumption and product evaluation processing differ across ethnic groups (Korzenny et al., 2017; Chapa et al., 2018).

Social media consumers actively use cognitive capabilities when viewing celebrity and influencer endorsements (Alhabash et al., 2017). Ethnic groups consume social media differently, and their mental process when evaluating products differs (Chapa et al., 2020). For example, Hispanic and Eastern Asian consumers (Chinese, Korean, and Japanese) are highly masculine; this makes them more competitive and prone to show off their products than other ethnic groups (Chapa et al., 2020). This contention might drive them to have a higher likability for a celebrity endorsement representing the elite, an aspiration reference when evaluating products endorsed by celebrities versus social media influencers. Yet, no empirical evidence compares celebrities and influencers across ethnic groups. This raises the question of what differences exist among ethnic groups.

Age-Cohort: A Generational Effect

Nowadays, much of the brand familiarization process is taking place on social media, where consumers are exposed to advertising or where they go to resort to influencers and other people's views on products and brands. As previously discussed, the higher the level of involvement, the higher the cognitive processes might be (i.e., Petty et al., 1983; Erygit, 2013). Hence, social media salience is thriving in purchasing decisions because consumers spend time across platforms overall. For example, teens now spend up to nine hours daily on the Internet, while 30% of all time spent online is allocated to social media (Statista, 2020). Such interactions may also involve product involvement and influencer views that may strengthen or weaken the purchasing intent. This assumption raises our next research question: Is the impact of celebrity endorsers and social media influencers different across age groups? Specifically, do consumers' attitudes toward celebrity and social media influencers differ for medium and high-involvement products across age groups? In addition, do consumers' intention to purchase driven by celebrity endorsement and social media influencers differ by age group for medium and high involvement products?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

In terms of hypotheses building, the theories of Ethnicity, Involvement, Attitude formation, and Parasocial relationships are utilized to understand the role of social media influencers and celebrity endorsement in consumer behavior. First, Ethnicity Theory is taken into consideration to determine the effect of ethnicity on consumer purchase intentions. Ethnicity theory posits that consumers of different ethnic groups process information and consume products differently (Shinew et al., 2004; Terlutter et al., 2021). These various forms of behavior are due to in-group cohesion and incongruous differences in how they perceive and attach symbolic meaning to endorsements and products based on their beliefs, traditions, and cultural values (Rossiter & Chan, 1998).

The Involvement Theory postulates that a consumer's involvement in a purchase is determined by the degree of intensity and immersion experienced toward the product (Andrews et al., 1990). This involvement is usually influenced by the brand perception, price, features, and perceived satisfaction associated with the product (Petty et al., 1983) and is driven by the needs, wants, and goals of the consumer (Andrews et al., 1990). These factors interact complexly and determine the manifestation of the consumer's purchase intention (Zaichkowsky, 1986). This behavioral manifestation towards the product can result from the consumer's internal processing, which may occur in two different ways. First, once the stimulus reaches the customer in the form of a product's visual or advert, the information is processed in the brain via either the central route system or the peripheral route system, ultimately determining the purchase decision (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Attitude formation via the central or peripheral route depends on the degree of engagement exhibited by the consumer in processing the information and product perception (Cho, 1999). Thus, attitude change or behavioral manifestations under high-involvement situations or for high-involvement products will occur because of careful elaboration of the content of the persuasive message or product features via the brain's central route (Cho, 1999). However, attitude formation or purchase intent in lower-involvement situations navigates via the peripheral route using peripheral cues (Bhutada et al., 2017) like attractiveness, emotional appeal, type of endorser, endorser attractiveness, and other elements that involve a low quotient of logic but a high sensory appeal.

Parasocial Relationship (PSR) theory describes the phenomenon where people interact with media personalities in a way where they feel an illusion of a conversation or some response is perceived (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Grant et al.,1991). PSR usually includes spectators, such as followers, who engage in relational maintenance and commitment to continuing interactions with the performer (Eyal & Dailey, 2012), in this case, the influencers. PSR manifests through a perceived, maintained relationship more involved in nature (2002). In addition, the PSR literature indicates that the relatability of the source is the ability to sympathize with consumers, and it is found when they (influencers) seem more at ease with ordinary people than celebrities (Schouten et al., 2020). Therefore, it is suggested that relatability perpetuates a sense of trustworthiness toward influencers (Reinikainen et al., 2020).

Based on the parasocial relationship involvement and attitude formation theories, consumers will have more positive attitudes toward higher-involvement products when endorsed by an influencer. This assumption is based on the idea that the rationale-based central route is involved and that consumers might feel more relatable to them than a celebrity (Reinikainen et al., 2020; Blanche et al., 2021; Zeren & Gökdağlı, 2020). On the other hand, for medium involvement products, it is expected that consumers will have more significant positive attitudes when the product is promoted by traditional celebrities instead. This is expected based on the assumption that consumers who associate the products with celebrity fame and attractive appeal require lower consumer involvement, and consequently, the peripheral route is undertaken. Therefore, the following hypotheses are presented:

H1: The impact of the perceived celebrity endorsement is higher on consumers' intention to purchase a medium-involvement product than a high-involvement product.

H2: The impact of the perceived social media influencer endorsement is higher on consumers' intention to purchase a high-involvement product than a medium-involvement product.

H3: For medium-involvement products, celebrity endorsers have more influence on purchase intentions than social media influencers.

H4: For high-involvement products, influencers significantly impact purchase intentions more than celebrity endorsers.

Next, the following research questions are also based on the theory of ethnicity and the literature that claims that attitude formation varies by age, gender, and ethnicity (i.e., Perloff et al.,2014; Gonzalez et al., 2011).

RQ1. Do consumers' attitudes toward celebrity and social media influencers and their intention to purchase the endorsed product differ across ethnic groups for medium- and high-involvement products?

RQ2. Do consumers' attitudes toward celebrity and social media influencers and their intention to purchase the endorsed product differ between males and females for medium- and high-involvement products?

RQ3. Do consumers' attitudes toward celebrity and social media influencers and their intention to purchase the endorsed product differ across age cohorts for medium- and high-involvement products?

RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative Procedure

A multimethod research study was used in this study. First, a focus group was conducted with graduate students to identify the product involvement characteristics that matter to them. The participants were asked to identify product attributes they might use to categorize medium and high-involvement products. Consistent with the literature (Ferreira et al., 2015; Dholakia, 2001), participants agreed that the most critical attribute was the price; therefore, "price" was the main criterion for product involvement selection. Thus, they were asked to indicate the price ranges they consider a baseline for medium and high-involvement products. The participants indicated that for the medium-involvement level, the price range of the product was in the hundreds. Then, participants suggested that the price range for high-involvement products was in the thousands. Lastly, they were asked to identify five gender-neutral products in each category for the following product selection test. Next, the authors ran a pilot with a group of graduate students to select out of the five items identified as gender-neutral with the highest inter-judge reliability in each category. Participants selected the product that better represented each category: a pair of sneakers was chosen as a medium-involvement product, and a car as a high-involvement.

Quantitative Data Collection

An online quantitative survey procedure was employed using a nationwide online panel. The data was collected in partnership with the Dynata Research Group. The data was collected during two weeks. Two qualifying- and one response-validation questions were included in the survey. After checking for valid responses and qualifiers, 799 valid cases comprise the total sample population. The qualifying/filter questions were age and Instagram consumption. Hence, the sample of this study represents the population of Instagram users out of a panel of 3,500 participants. Those who had an Instagram account qualified for this study. Thus, this sample represents the population of Instagram consumers who were 18 years old and older. For gender, 39.3% identified themselves as males (n= 314) and 60.7% as females (n= 485). This is consistent with current consumer reports; females are more prone to use Instagram than males. In terms of ethnic identification, 31.8% of the participants were non-Hispanic White (n= 254), 27.2% were Hispanic (n= 217), 17.9% were Black (n= 143), and 21.6% were Asian Americans (n= 173). 1.5% of the participants (n= 12) selected "other" for Ethnicity. In terms of age cohorts, 26.9% were identified as Gen Z (n= 215), 39.4% were Gen Y (n= 315), 33.7% were members of Gen X (n= 269), and 4% were Baby Boomers (N=30).

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Measure Validation

Two already developed and validated Likert scales were used in the instrument. Attitudes toward the endorsers were measured using Hung's (2014) scale. Purchase intention for high and medium-involvement products was adapted from the Purchase Intention scale used by Baker and Churchill (1977). The scales were validated using exploratory factor analysis with a Varimax rotation to determine the percentage of variance explained and the dimensions of factor loadings. Cronbach alphas were run to test for reliability. *The attitude Towards Celebrity scale had an alpha of .90,* with 83.9% of the variance explained. The *Attitude towards Social Media Influencer* scale had an alpha value of 0.87, with 79.2% of the variance explained. The Purchase Intention scale for a Celebrity Endorser and Social Media Influencer also showed high Cronbach's alphas (0.83 & 0.84) and high levels of variance being explained (0.84 and 0.86). The square root of the AVEs was higher than the correlation between variables, indicating that the measures met an appropriate level of discriminant validity.

Hypotheses Testing

Several parametric tests were run to test the hypotheses and answer the research questions. Paired-sample T-tests were conducted to test hypotheses H1 to H4. The results are displayed in Table 1. First, the results indicated that the impact of the perceived celebrity endorsement is higher on consumers' intention to purchase a medium-involvement product (shoe) than a high-involvement product (t=11.07, p= .001); thus, H1 is supported. Second, a significant difference was found when the intention to purchase a high-involvement product (car) endorsed by social media influencers on Instagram (t= -9.34, p = .001) than a medium-involvement (shoe); H2 is supported. As proposed in H3, the results indicate that for medium-involvement products (shoes), celebrities have more influence on purchase intention than social media influencers do (t=2.34, p=.001). Therefore, H3 is supported. Finally, the mean squared errors when comparing intention to purchase high-involvement products show no significant difference in the impact of a celebrity and an influencer (t=1.86, p=. 85); hence, H4 is rejected. See Table 1.

TABLE 1
PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST FOR HYPOTHESES TESTING

Paired Sampled	M	SD	t	P-value	Hypothesis
IP car endorsed by a celebrity	3.77	1.62	11.07	.00	H1
IP shoe endorsed by a celebrity	4.27	1.68			
IP car endorsed by an influencer	4.17	1.62	-9.34	.00	H2
IP shoe endorsed by an influencer	3.76	1.68			
IP shoe endorsed by a celebrity	4.27	1.66	2.34	.01	H3
IP shoe endorsed by an influencer	4.17	1.66			
IP car endorsed by a celebrity	3.77	1.70	1.86	.85	H4
IP car endorsed by an influencer	3.76	1.68			

To investigate RQ1, a one-way ANOVA was run for all variables to explore if group differences existed among ethnicities. The results showed that *the intention to purchase* and the *attitude toward the endorser* (celebrity or influencer) do not differ across ethnic groups. Furthermore, consumers of all ethnic segments exhibit similar attitudes towards both types of endorsers and purchase intentions endorsed by celebrities and social media influencers for high and medium-involvement products compared to their African-American, Asian American, or White counterparts, regardless of the type of endorser involved.

An independent T-test was employed to test whether a difference existed between males and females regarding their *intention to purchase* and their *attitude toward the endorser* when exposed to a celebrity or influencer (RQ2). The results demonstrate that males and females differ in their *intention to purchase* when exposed to endorsements by either celebrities or social media influencers, but the genders do not differ in terms of their *Attitude Towards Influencers*; $F(1, 785) = 2.432$, $p>0.05$. See Table 2.

TABLE 2
T-TEST COMPARING THE EFFECT OF GENDER

Intercept	Male		Female			
	M	SD	M	SD	F	P-value
Attitude towards celebrity	4.58	1.39	4.21	1.41	13.19	.00*
Attitude towards influencer	4.48	1.35	4.30	1.29	2.43	.19
IP car endorsed by a celebrity	4.13	1.68	3.50	1.67	1.67	.00*
IP shoes endorsed by a celebrity	4.49	1.65	4.10	1.65	10.00	.00*
IP car endorsed by an influencer	4.11	1.70	3.50	1.63	23.23	.00*
IP shoes endorsed by an influencer	4.39	1.59	4.01	1.63	10.12	.00*

*p value < .05

Lastly, another ANOVA test was performed to explore group differences among age cohorts concerning participants' *intention to purchase* and their *attitude toward the endorser* when exposed to a celebrity or influencer (RQ3). Overall, the results show a significant difference among age groups concerning attitudes toward celebrities, attitudes toward social media influencers, and intention to purchase high and low-involvement products endorsed by a celebrity and by an influencer. See Table 3.

TABLE 3
ANOVA TEST COMPARING THE EFFECT OF AGE

Intercept	Mean Squared	F	p
Attitude towards celebrity	4.462	2.233	.038*
Attitude towards influencer	3.018	1.732	.111
IP car endorsed by a celebrity	17.58	6.311	.000*
IP shoes endorsed by a celebrity	8.567	3.153	.005*
IP car endorsed by an influencer	13.155	4.774	.000*
IP shoes endorsed by an influencer	8.192	3.146	.005*

Specifically, the post-hoc Bonferroni Univariate Test shows that Gen Z consumers differ in their intention to purchase a high-involvement product (car) compared to Gen Y (millennial) and Xennial consumers for both celebrity-driven endorsements and social media influencer ones. Members of Gen Y exhibited a greater intentions to purchase (M= 4.24, SD= 1.63) when high-involvement products were endorsed by a traditional celebrity, as compared to members of Gen Z (M= 3.26, SD= 1.67). Xennial consumers also exhibited a greater inclination to purchase a high-involvement product endorsed by a celebrity (M= 4.16, SD= 1.66) than their Gen Z counterparts. Concerning the impact of endorsers on medium involvement products, Gen Y (M= 4.49, SD=1.53) and Xennial consumers (M= 4.62, SD= 1.66) exhibited a higher intention to purchase products endorsed by traditional celebrities compared to Baby Boomers (M= 3.30, SD= 1.49, p =). Similarly, for influencer-endorsed medium involvement products, there are statistically significant differences in intention to purchase between Baby Boomer consumers (M= 3.20, SD= 1.13) and Gen Y (M= 4.32, SD= 1.58), 39-44 (M= 4.47, SD= 1.66) as well as Baby Boomers and Xennials (M= 4.28, SD= 1.64). This indicates that Baby Boomers are significantly less likely to be influenced by celebrity-driven and influencer-driven endorsements for medium-involvement products, the same way Xennials and Gen Y consumers are.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

The study asserts that celebrity endorsement and social media influencers positively affect consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions on medium-involvement and high-involvement products. The research showed that endorser-driven campaigns are more effective among males than females when promoting shoes such as sneakers. Specifically, results state that the impact of celebrity endorsement and social media influencers have on consumers' intent to purchase is higher for medium-involvement products than for high-involvement ones. The findings also suggest that celebrities influence the intention to buy medium products more than social media influencers endorsement influencers (t=2.34, p=.000). At the same time, the results showed no significant difference in the impact of a celebrity and an influencer on consumers' intention to purchase a high involvement product. The findings contradict the recent premise that celebrities are more effective endorsers than social media influencers (Zeren& Gökdağlı, 2020). In addition, the results indicate that the impact of celebrity endorsement and social media influencers on attitudes and intentions to purchase differ among age groups and genders, while no significant difference was observed among ethnic groups.

The results show that celebrity endorsements are more impactful than social media influencers for medium-involvement products, particularly for members of Gen Y (Millennials) and Xennials. In the case of Gen Z, the study shows that either celebrities or social media influencers, especially when considering high-involvement product purchases, do not influence these consumers as significantly as expected. Hence, endorsers are not recommended for high-involvement products when targeting members of Gen Z. Instead, products should be advertised using a different advertising form, such as product placement or perhaps using a more informative message highlighting product attributes, benefits, and sustainability.

Concerning gender, the findings show that males are more affected by celebrity-driven and influencer-driven social media endorsements than their female counterparts in inducing high-involvement purchase intentions. This result implies that promotions associated with gender-specific products for males may be

particularly successful in using celebrities and social media influencers. The literature indicates that social media influencers have a severe impact on their audiences (Casaló et al., 2020); this study supports the effect of celebrity endorsement and social media influencers on male intention to purchase medium and high-involvement products. Consequently, practitioners and lawmakers must pay attention to regulating and enforcing sponsorship and advertising policies on social media and influencing marketing. In addition, ethical practices, including restrictions on unsafe product consumption, must be carefully controlled when targeting young consumers and minors. Lastly, Millenials and Gen Z are driven by brands involved in social responsibility and cause-related marketing campaigns. Therefore, companies and brands should realize that influencers can positively impact brands as quickly as they can turn consumers against them by making them boycott their products (Bravo, 2020). Therefore, social responsibility is a must in today's marketing practice, and companies must act in a manner that can help the environment and society.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Despite the theoretical and managerial contributions, this study has several limitations. First, Asian American consumers were clustered in one single segment as a homogenous group when in fact, Asian sub-cultures can be significantly different in traditions, beliefs, and values. Future research should consider testing for group differences within the Asian segment using sub-ethnic identification measures. Second, the sample of this study was restrained to Instagram users; hence, the result cannot be generalized. Future research can be done using different social media platforms such as TikTok. Third, the external validity can be questionable since the study did not include specific brand names or explicit endorsers. These findings, therefore, must be corroborated using authentic brands and real celebrities and influencers. Next, the data was collected using an online survey, limiting the results' generalizability. In addition, social desirability was not tested in this study. Then, the data was collected in the US, limiting the study's findings to similar markets holding a culturally diverse population. Lastly, the product category selection was based on only one criterion, price. In addition, the study was limited to studying the impact of endorsement on sneakers and cars only. Future studies should consider another approach for selecting the level of involvement of the products. Finally, a huge niche of queer influencers targeting the LGBTQ+ community is also taking social media by storm, particularly in the fashion and beauty industries. Such trends are interesting and pertinent for researchers. Future research must explore the power of queer influencers as influencers on members and non-members of the LGBTQ+ segment as this niche continues surfacing on social media.

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