

Credibility over Visibility: Reevaluating Celebrity vs Influencer vs No-face Brand Endorsements for Generation Z in India

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Abstract:

Marketers face persistent uncertainty regarding the comparative effectiveness and return on investment of prevailing endorsement formats when targeting India's Gen Z consumer segment. This study systematically examines the relative impact of celebrity, human influencer, and no face product-only advertising executions across low-involvement and high-involvement product categories. A quantitative mixed factorial design structured as 3 (Endorser Type) × 2 (Product Involvement) with approximately 300 Gen Z participants assigns each respondent to one endorser condition while exposing them to two advertisements differing in involvement level. Post-exposure questionnaires utilizing five-point Likert scales assess perceived credibility, perceived authenticity, attitude toward the advertisement and brand, brand trust, purchase intention, and both aided and unaided brand recall, supplemented by manipulation checks and relevant control variables. Primary analytical procedures employ mixed analysis of variance and linear mixed-effects models to test main effects, interaction effects, and planned contrasts, with bootstrap-based mediation analysis examining whether credibility and authenticity perceptions transmit endorser-type effects to downstream brand outcomes. The research objectives centre on identifying the specific conditions under which influencers may effectively substitute for celebrity endorsers and determining whether no-face executions retain persuasive efficacy with Gen Z audiences, particularly as moderated by product involvement level. Findings are anticipated to yield actionable strategic guidance for endorser selection processes, budget allocation frameworks, and creative brief development, while clarifying the underlying credibility-visibility trade-off and delineating its boundary conditions within contemporary Gen Z advertising contexts.

Keywords:

Celebrity, Influencers, No-face, Endorsements, Endorser selection, Brand perspective, Gen Z.