

Effect of Celebrity Trustworthiness on Brand Performance of the Dairy Industry in Kenya

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Abstract

Celebrity endorsements leverage the fame, credibility and influence of celebrities to create favourable associations between endorsers and brands, potentially enhancing consumer perceptions and brand performance. This study examined the effect of Celebrity Trustworthiness on Brand Performance in the Kenyan dairy industry and further investigated whether Marketing Strategy Alignment moderates this relationship. Specifically, the study sought to determine the effect of Celebrity Trustworthiness on Brand Performance and establish the moderating effect of Marketing Strategy Alignment on the relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance. The study was guided by Source Credibility Theory and Contingency Theory, and adopted a positivist research philosophy and survey research design. The target population comprised 218 dairy firms in Kenya, from which a sample of 141 managers was selected using stratified sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis with interaction terms to test the moderating effect. The findings established that Celebrity Trustworthiness had a positive and statistically significant effect on Brand Performance ($B = 0.328$, $\beta = 0.325$, $t = 5.066$, $p < .001$). The direct-effect model explained 48.2% of the variance in Brand Performance ($R^2 = .482$). When Marketing Strategy Alignment and the interaction terms were incorporated, the explanatory power increased to 51.6% ($R^2 = .516$), representing an incremental increase of 3.4 percentage points. Importantly, the interaction between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Marketing Strategy Alignment was positive and statistically significant ($B = 0.086$, $\beta = 0.272$, $t = 2.573$, $p = .011$), confirming that Marketing Strategy Alignment positively moderates the relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance. The study concludes that celebrity trustworthiness is an important determinant of brand performance and that its effectiveness is enhanced when celebrity endorsement activities are strategically aligned with the firm's broader marketing strategy. The study recommends that dairy firms should select celebrities who are perceived as credible, honest and dependable and should integrate celebrity endorsement activities with their overall marketing strategies to maximize brand performance. The findings provide empirical support for Source Credibility and Contingency perspectives while extending their application to the Kenyan dairy industry.

Key Words: Celebrity Trustworthiness; Brand Performance; Marketing Strategy Alignment; Celebrity Endorsement; Source Credibility Theory; Contingency Theory; Dairy Industry; Kenya

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1. Introduction

The foundational paradigm governing corporate growth in Kenya's fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector has assumed that brand equity can be systematically developed through strategic marketing interventions. However, the domestic dairy industry operates within a complex and highly competitive environment that challenges this assumption. The sector faces escalating macro-environmental pressures, including climate-induced supply disruptions, rising animal-feed and

distribution costs, and regulatory uncertainties that threaten the economic sustainability of smallholder farmers, who account for a substantial proportion of Kenya's milk supply. Despite the reported expansion in processed milk volumes from 4.6 billion litres in 2022 to 5.2 billion litres in 2023, dairy processors continue to operate in a highly competitive and trust-sensitive marketplace (KALRO, 2023; KNBS, 2024). In such an environment, conventional transactional strategies, particularly price-based competition, may provide limited opportunities for sustained brand performance.

The increasing commoditisation of dairy products has intensified the need for strategies that enable firms to establish meaningful differentiation and strengthen consumer confidence. Celebrity trustworthiness represents one such strategic avenue because consumers may transfer perceptions of honesty, integrity, credibility, and dependability associated with a celebrity to the endorsed dairy brand. Previous studies have demonstrated that trustworthy endorsers can positively influence consumer attitudes and behavioural responses. For instance, studies in West Africa established that endorser credibility and trustworthiness influence consumer attitudes in different service contexts, including telecommunications in Nigeria and Ghana (Omorodion & Osifo, 2019; Zakari et al., 2019). Similarly, studies on corporate branding in South Africa and Tanzania have emphasised the importance of culturally appropriate promotional strategies (Molelekeng & Dondolo, 2021; Chille et al., 2023).

Within Kenya, Kainyu (2022) established a positive relationship between celebrity trustworthiness and consumer-based brand equity, while Orina (2022) linked celebrity prestige with purchase intentions across different industries. However, these studies largely focused on subjective consumer responses and pre-purchase psychological outcomes rather than brand performance as an organisational outcome. Furthermore, much of the existing literature has examined celebrity trustworthiness as an independent promotional attribute without adequately considering the strategic context within which celebrity trustworthiness operates.

In particular, there remains inadequate empirical understanding of whether the effectiveness of celebrity trustworthiness in enhancing brand performance depends on the organisation's broader marketing strategy. A celebrity may be perceived as trustworthy, but the extent to which this trustworthiness translates into improved brand performance may depend on how well the endorsement is integrated with the firm's positioning, communication, targeting, differentiation, and other marketing activities. Consequently, treating celebrity trustworthiness as operating independently of marketing strategy may provide an incomplete explanation of its contribution to brand performance. This gap is particularly important in Kenya's dairy industry, where formal dairy brands compete not only against one another but also against informal milk distribution networks. In such a trust-sensitive market, consumers may evaluate dairy brands based on perceived authenticity, reliability, quality, value, and credibility. Celebrity trustworthiness may therefore contribute to brand performance by strengthening consumer confidence and favourable brand perceptions. However, the strength of this effect may vary depending on the extent to which the firm's marketing strategy effectively aligns celebrity trustworthiness with its overall brand positioning and market objectives.

Therefore, the problem addressed by this study is the limited empirical evidence on the effect of celebrity trustworthiness on brand performance and the extent to which marketing strategy moderates this relationship in Kenya's dairy industry. Addressing this gap will provide empirical evidence on whether celebrity trustworthiness constitutes an effective strategic resource for improving brand performance and whether its effectiveness is enhanced or constrained by the firm's marketing strategy.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

General Objective

To examine the effect of celebrity trustworthiness on brand performance of the dairy industry in Kenya

Specific Objectives

- To establish the effect of celebrity trustworthiness on brand performance of the dairy industry in Kenya.
- To determine the moderating effect of marketing strategy on the relationship between celebrity trustworthiness and brand performance of the dairy industry in Kenya.

1.2 Research Hypotheses

The study tested the following null hypotheses:

- H01: Celebrity trustworthiness has no significant effect on brand performance of the dairy industry in Kenya.
- H02: Marketing strategy has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between celebrity trustworthiness and brand performance of the dairy industry in Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Source Credibility Theory

Source Credibility Theory, developed by Hovland et al. (1953), provides the principal theoretical foundation for explaining the role of celebrity trustworthiness in influencing brand performance. The theory posits that audiences are more likely to accept and act upon messages communicated by sources whom they perceive as credible. In the context of advertising and celebrity communication, source credibility is principally reflected through trustworthiness and expertise, with trustworthiness referring to the perceived honesty, integrity, dependability, and benevolence of the source, while expertise reflects the perceived knowledge and competence of the endorser. A celebrity who is perceived to be trustworthy can therefore increase consumers' confidence in the information communicated about a brand and enhance acceptance of the promotional message (Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1990). The uploaded literature similarly identifies trustworthiness as a central dimension of source credibility and explains that a trustworthy celebrity can evoke confidence in the claims made about an endorsed brand.

The theory is particularly relevant to this study because celebrity trustworthiness constitutes the independent variable. The perceived honesty and integrity of a celebrity can influence how consumers evaluate the credibility of the brand message and, consequently, their perceptions of the endorsed dairy brand. When consumers believe that a celebrity is sincere and dependable, they may be more receptive to the celebrity's communication and more likely to develop favourable perceptions of the associated brand. Trustworthiness can therefore facilitate the transfer of positive perceptions from the celebrity to the brand, potentially contributing to improved brand-related outcomes. The existing literature cited in the study provides empirical support for this theoretical proposition. For

instance, Kainyu (2022) is reported to have established that celebrity trustworthiness enhanced consumer-based brand equity among Kenyan consumers, demonstrating the relevance of source credibility in the Kenyan marketing context.

The relevance of Source Credibility Theory is further strengthened by its application to the Kenyan dairy industry, where consumers make decisions concerning products associated with health, nutrition, quality, and safety. In such a context, the credibility and trustworthiness of the individual communicating the brand message can be particularly important in shaping consumer perceptions. The theory suggests that a celebrity perceived as honest and credible can make promotional communication more persuasive because consumers are more likely to accept information originating from a source they trust. The uploaded literature illustrates this application through examples of celebrity associations with dairy brands, where the perceived credibility and attributes of endorsers are linked to favourable brand perceptions and loyalty. Accordingly, Source Credibility Theory provides an appropriate explanation of why differences in perceived celebrity trustworthiness may be associated with differences in brand performance.

The theory also provides a basis for examining the moderating role of marketing strategy in the relationship between celebrity trustworthiness and brand performance. Although Source Credibility Theory principally explains how characteristics of a communication source influence message acceptance, the uploaded literature recognises that the effectiveness of credibility can vary according to the context in which the endorser operates. In particular, it identifies strategic alignment as a factor that can magnify or undermine the effectiveness of credible endorsers. In this study, marketing strategy is therefore considered a contextual condition that may influence the strength of the relationship between celebrity trustworthiness and brand performance. Where a firm's marketing strategy is appropriately aligned with the celebrity's image, credibility, and the intended brand positioning, the positive influence of celebrity trustworthiness may be reinforced through consistent communication and market positioning. Conversely, where the marketing strategy is poorly aligned with the celebrity and the brand's intended positioning, the potential benefits associated with celebrity trustworthiness may be weakened.

The moderating perspective is also consistent with the identified limitations of Source Credibility Theory. The uploaded literature notes that the theory has traditionally relied heavily on Western experimental settings and may not adequately account for contextual and cultural factors that influence how credibility is interpreted in different markets. It further observes that cultural values and socioeconomic differences may strengthen or dilute the influence of trustworthiness. By incorporating marketing strategy as a moderating variable, the present study extends the application of Source Credibility Theory beyond the direct relationship between source characteristics and consumer responses. It examines whether the effectiveness of celebrity trustworthiness in generating brand performance depends on the strategic environment created by the firm's marketing activities.

Consequently, Source Credibility Theory provides a coherent theoretical explanation for the study's proposed relationship in which celebrity trustworthiness is the independent variable, brand performance is the dependent variable, and marketing strategy is the moderating variable. The theory suggests that a trustworthy celebrity can enhance the credibility and acceptance of brand communication, while the strategic alignment of the firm's marketing activities may determine the extent to which such credibility is translated into favourable brand outcomes. This theoretical positioning is consistent with the study's emphasis on testing not only the direct effect of celebrity trustworthiness but also whether marketing strategy strengthens or weakens its relationship with brand performance. The study therefore contributes to the application of Source Credibility Theory

by examining this relationship within the specific and trust-sensitive context of Kenya's dairy industry.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework provides a systematic representation of the presumed relationships among the variables examined in the study. It illustrates how Celebrity Trustworthiness, as the independent variable, influences Brand Performance, the dependent variable, and how Marketing Strategy Alignment moderates this relationship. The framework is grounded in the premise that consumers are more likely to develop favourable perceptions and responses towards dairy brands endorsed by celebrities perceived as credible, honest, dependable and believable. However, the effectiveness of celebrity trustworthiness may vary depending on the extent to which celebrity endorsement activities are aligned with the firm's overall marketing strategy. Accordingly, the framework provides the basis for empirically examining both the direct effect of Celebrity Trustworthiness on Brand Performance and the moderating effect of Marketing Strategy Alignment within the Kenyan dairy industry.

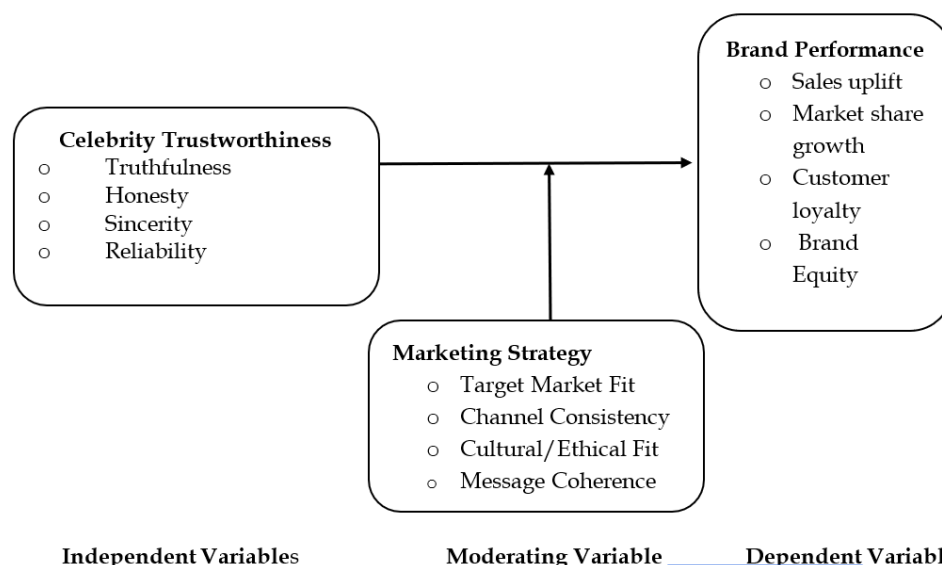


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between celebrity trustworthiness, marketing strategy and brand performance in the Kenyan dairy industry. The design was appropriate because the study sought to obtain standardized information from respondents concerning their perceptions of celebrity endorsements and their association with brand-related outcomes at a particular point in time. Descriptive survey designs are particularly useful where researchers seek to quantify perceptions, attitudes and behavioural assessments across a defined population using standardized instruments. The use of a structured questionnaire also facilitates comparability of responses across respondents and geographical locations. The design was particularly relevant to the present study because celebrity endorsement is a multidimensional

marketing phenomenon whose effectiveness may depend on how consumers and organizational marketing personnel perceive the credibility of the endorser and the strategic context within which the endorsement is implemented. Previous research indicates that source credibility, particularly trustworthiness, is an important determinant of advertising and brand outcomes. Wang and Scheinbaum (2018), for example, found that celebrity trustworthiness can enhance brand attitude, brand credibility and purchase intention, with trustworthiness being particularly influential among low-involvement consumers. Similarly, Lou and Yuan (2019) established that influencer trustworthiness contributes to consumers' trust in branded content and subsequently influences brand awareness and purchase intentions.

A descriptive cross-sectional design also enabled the study to compare perceptions across firms located in different regions of Kenya. This was important because the dairy market encompasses consumers and organizations operating in diverse geographical, cultural and socioeconomic environments. The design therefore provided a structured basis for assessing whether perceptions of celebrity trustworthiness were associated with brand performance and whether the strength of this relationship varied according to marketing strategy. The study used a structured questionnaire consisting of Likert-scale items measuring celebrity trustworthiness, marketing strategy and brand performance. Likert-type measures are appropriate for capturing latent constructs such as perceived credibility, strategic alignment and brand-related outcomes because they enable respondents to express the intensity of their agreement with multiple statements representing each construct. The use of several indicators for each construct also permits assessment of internal consistency and construct validity before inferential analysis. It is important to note that the descriptive cross-sectional design establishes associations rather than definitive causal relationships. Consequently, the findings are interpreted as evidence of statistically significant relationships among celebrity trustworthiness, marketing strategy and brand performance rather than as proof of temporal causality. This distinction is particularly important in survey-based marketing research because perceptions of celebrity endorsement and brand performance are measured contemporaneously.

3.2 Target Population

The target population comprised 218 respondents drawn from selected dairy-industry locations in Kenya. The respondents occupied positions considered relevant to celebrity endorsement, marketing communication and brand performance, namely sales and marketing managers, brand managers, public relations officers, product development officers and digital marketing executives. These categories were selected because their professional responsibilities provide direct exposure to marketing strategy, brand communication, customer engagement and promotional activities.

Table 1: Target Population

Location	Sales & Marketing Managers	Brand Managers	PR Officers	Product Development Officers	Digital Marketing Executives	Total
Athi River	6	2	1	1	1	11
Kisii	6	2	1	1	1	11
Meru	6	2	1	1	1	11
Murang'a	12	3	2	2	1	20
Nakuru	18	5	2	2	2	29
NBI Central	12	3	2	2	2	21

Location	Sales & Marketing Managers	Brand Managers	PR Officers	Product Development Officers	Digital Marketing Executives	Total
NBI South	6	2	1	1	1	11
NBI West	18	5	2	2	2	29
Nyeri	9	3	1	1	1	15
Thika	6	2	1	1	1	11
Olkalou	30	8	4	4	3	49
Total	129	37	18	18	16	218

Table 1 shows that sales and marketing managers constituted the largest respondent category, with 129 respondents (59.2%) of the target population. Brand managers accounted for 37 respondents (17.0%), while public relations officers and product development officers each accounted for 18 respondents (8.3%). Digital marketing executives accounted for 16 respondents (7.3%). The relatively large proportion of sales and marketing managers was appropriate because these respondents are directly involved in marketing decisions, brand communication and market performance assessment. Geographically, Olkalou contributed the largest proportion of the population, with 49 respondents (22.5%), followed by Nakuru and Nairobi West, each with 29 respondents (13.3%). The remaining locations contributed between 11 and 21 respondents. The distribution ensured that the study incorporated organizational perspectives from multiple locations rather than concentrating exclusively on a single commercial centre.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate

A total of 141 questionnaires were distributed to eligible respondents, of which 106 were returned and deemed usable for analysis. This produced an overall response rate of 75.2%.

Table 2: Questionnaire Response Rate

Location	Target Population	Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Returned	Response Rate (%)
Athi River	11	7	5	71.4
Kisii	11	7	5	71.4
Meru	11	7	5	71.4
Murang'a	20	13	10	76.9
Nakuru	29	19	15	78.9
NBI Central	21	14	11	78.6
NBI South	11	7	5	71.4
NBI West	29	19	14	73.7
Nyeri	15	10	8	80.0
Thika	11	7	5	71.4
Olkalou	49	31	23	74.2
Total	218	141	106	75.2

The overall response rate of 75.2% indicates substantial participation in the survey. Location-specific response rates ranged from 71.4% in Athi River, Kisii, Meru, Nairobi South and Thika to 80.0% in Nyeri. The relatively narrow range suggests that nonresponse was not concentrated in a single location. Nevertheless, response rate should be interpreted as an indicator of survey participation rather than direct evidence of representativeness. Contemporary survey methodology emphasizes that response rate alone does not establish the absence of nonresponse bias; representativeness is also dependent on the sampling procedure and whether respondents systematically differ from nonrespondents. The 106 usable responses provided the empirical basis for subsequent descriptive and inferential analyses. Given the cross-sectional nature of the study, the results should be interpreted within the population and sampling boundaries defined by the research design.

4.2 Reliability and Construct Validity

Reliability Analysis

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Reliability of the Measurement Scales

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Celebrity Trustworthiness	12	0.701	Acceptable
Marketing Strategy	12	0.835	Good
Brand Performance	12	0.784	Good

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.701 to 0.835. Celebrity Trustworthiness recorded an alpha coefficient of 0.701, which is at the conventional threshold for acceptable internal consistency, while Marketing Strategy recorded the highest coefficient ($\alpha = 0.835$). Brand Performance also demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.784$). Methodological literature commonly treats coefficients around 0.70 or above as adequate for research purposes, although alpha should not be regarded as an absolute boundary between reliable and unreliable measures.

The results therefore suggest that the items measuring each construct exhibited sufficient internal consistency for subsequent analysis. Importantly, the coefficient for Celebrity Trustworthiness, although the lowest of the three, was not below the commonly accepted threshold. The results provide reasonable evidence that the items were measuring sufficiently related aspects of their respective constructs.

Construct Validity

Construct suitability was further assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity.

Table 4: KMO and Bartlett's Test Results

Variable	KMO	Bartlett's χ^2	df	p-value
Celebrity Trustworthiness	0.728	97.203	66	<0.001
Marketing Strategy	0.756	124.817	66	<0.001
Brand Performance	0.693	92.608	66	<0.001

All three constructs recorded KMO values above 0.60. Celebrity Trustworthiness had a KMO value of 0.728, Marketing Strategy 0.756, and Brand Performance 0.693. These results indicate acceptable sampling adequacy for examining the correlation structure among the items. KMO values around or above 0.60 are commonly regarded as adequate for factorability, although higher values indicate stronger shared variance among indicators.

Bartlett's tests of sphericity were statistically significant for all three constructs ($p < 0.001$). This indicates that the correlation matrices were significantly different from identity matrices and that sufficient correlations existed among the items to justify factor-based assessment. Thus, the combined KMO and Bartlett results provide evidence that the measurement items possessed an adequate correlation structure for construct-validity assessment.

It should, however, be noted that KMO and Bartlett statistics establish factorability rather than proving construct validity on their own. Stronger evidence of construct validity would be obtained by reporting factor loadings, communalities and extracted variance from exploratory factor analysis, or confirmatory factor analysis where theoretically appropriate.

4.3 Descriptive Results

Celebrity Trustworthiness

Table 5 presents respondents' assessments of the role of celebrity trustworthiness in the performance of dairy brands.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Celebrity Trustworthiness

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
B1	Customers believe the endorser's claims, leading to increased brand trust and sales growth.	4.06	0.827
B2	Truthful celebrity endorsements improve the brand's credibility, enhancing market competitiveness.	4.12	0.747
B3	The honesty of the celebrity has helped strengthen customer loyalty to our dairy brand.	4.16	0.873
B4	Honest communication by the celebrity builds customer trust, driving sales performance.	4.03	0.932
B5	The endorser's honesty aligns with the brand's values, contributing to higher market share.	4.21	0.682
B6	Customer loyalty increases when the celebrity is perceived as honest and authentic.	4.24	0.688
B7	The sincerity of the celebrity endorsement makes the brand more relatable, improving sales.	4.22	0.713
B8	Sincere messaging from the endorser increases emotional connection with the brand, leading to market-share growth.	3.93	0.720
B9	Loyal customers often cite the endorser's sincerity as a reason for brand preference.	3.99	0.756
B10	The reliability of the celebrity in consistently representing the brand increases consumer trust and sales performance.	4.08	0.768
B11	A dependable celebrity endorser enhances brand stability and contributes to continuous market-share growth.	4.07	0.707
B12	Customers remain loyal to the brand because they perceive the celebrity as reliable and consistent in endorsements.	4.05	0.813
Overall Celebrity Trustworthiness		4.097	—

Scale: 1.00–1.70 = Strongly Disagree; 1.80–2.50 = Disagree; 2.60–3.30 = Uncertain; 3.40–4.10 = Agree; 4.20–5.00 = Strongly Agree.

The overall mean of 4.097 indicates a high level of agreement with statements measuring celebrity trustworthiness. The highest-rated item was B6, which stated that customer loyalty increases when a celebrity is perceived as honest and authentic ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.688$). This was followed by B7, concerning the sincerity of celebrity endorsements and brand relatability ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.713$), and B5, concerning alignment between celebrity honesty and brand values ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.682$). These findings suggest that respondents particularly associated trustworthiness with authenticity, loyalty and congruence between the endorser and the brand.

In contrast, B8, concerning sincere messaging and emotional connection, recorded the lowest mean ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.720$), although it still fell within the "Agree" category. This indicates that respondents were somewhat less emphatic about the emotional consequences of sincere endorsement messages than about the more direct credibility and loyalty consequences. The relatively low standard deviations across the items further indicate a substantial degree of consensus among respondents.

The finding that trustworthiness received consistently high ratings is consistent with Source Credibility Theory, which proposes that consumers evaluate persuasive messages partly according to the credibility of their source. In particular, Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) found that trustworthiness was especially important for low-involvement consumers and contributed to brand attitude, brand credibility and purchase intention.

The finding is also consistent with Lou and Yuan (2019), who found that influencer trustworthiness contributes to consumers' trust in branded content and subsequently influences brand awareness and purchase intentions. Similarly, Hussain et al. (2020) reported that celebrity trust has positive effects on advertising credibility and brand credibility, supporting the proposition that perceived trust in the endorser can be transferred to evaluations of the advertised brand.

The present results therefore extend the existing literature by showing that trustworthiness is not merely associated with advertising responses but is perceived by organizational respondents as relevant to broader brand-performance outcomes in the Kenyan dairy industry. The particularly high ratings for honesty, authenticity and brand-value alignment suggest that trustworthiness operates through both credibility and relational mechanisms. This interpretation is also consistent with research demonstrating that trust and identification can be important mechanisms through which endorsement influences advertising effectiveness.

However, the descriptive results alone do not establish that celebrity trustworthiness causes improvements in brand performance. That question is addressed through the regression analysis presented later.

Marketing Strategy

This section presents the descriptive findings on Marketing Strategy, which was examined as the moderating variable in the study. The analysis sought to establish respondents' perceptions of the extent to which the dairy firms' marketing strategies are aligned with and support celebrity endorsement activities. The findings are presented using the mean and standard deviation of the individual measurement items, as summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for Marketing Strategy

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
E1	A good target fit drives higher brand engagement.	4.11	0.733
E2	Brands perform better when they reflect customer needs.	4.26	0.681

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
E3	Poor fit leads to low interest and weak sales.	4.10	0.910
E4	Consistent channels reinforce brand identity.	4.08	0.789
E5	Aligned messaging boosts customer trust and response.	3.99	0.872
E6	Mixed channels dilute the brand and reduce impact.	4.05	0.771
E7	Cultural fit strengthens emotional brand connection.	4.02	0.747
E8	Ethical alignment improves public perception and loyalty.	4.03	0.720
E9	Misfit can damage brand image and reduce performance.	3.97	0.930
E10	Consistent and coherent celebrity messages across platforms enhance brand credibility, resulting in stronger sales performance.	4.13	0.839
E11	When the celebrity's message aligns seamlessly with brand communication, market share grows through unified brand perception.	4.06	0.824
E12	Clear and coherent endorsement messages build trust and emotional connection, fostering long-term customer loyalty.	4.08	0.736
Overall Marketing Strategy		4.073	—

Scale: 1.00–1.70 = Strongly Disagree; 1.80–2.50 = Disagree; 2.60–3.30 = Uncertain; 3.40–4.10 = Agree; 4.20–5.00 = Strongly Agree.

The overall mean of 4.073 demonstrates a generally favourable assessment of marketing strategy. The highest-rated statement was E2, which concerned responsiveness to customer needs ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.681$), followed by E10, which emphasized consistency and coherence of celebrity messages across platforms ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.839$). These results suggest that respondents viewed customer orientation and message consistency as particularly important elements of an effective marketing strategy.

The lowest mean was recorded for E9, concerning the potential damage caused by celebrity-brand misfit ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.930$), although this still represented agreement. Similarly, E5 recorded a mean of 3.99. The results suggest that respondents recognized strategic inconsistency and poor alignment as potential threats to brand outcomes, but the relatively larger standard deviations indicate somewhat greater variation in perceptions of these issues.

The results are consistent with the broader celebrity endorsement literature, which emphasizes that credibility and congruence influence the effectiveness of endorsement communications. For example, research comparing celebrity and influencer endorsements shows that credibility and identification can influence advertising effectiveness, while more recent evidence continues to identify source credibility and brand-endorser congruence as important mechanisms in endorsement outcomes.

Importantly, the descriptive evidence should not be interpreted as demonstrating that marketing strategy is already a statistically significant moderator. A high mean for Marketing Strategy merely indicates favourable perceptions of the construct. Whether marketing strategy changes the strength of the relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance must be established through the interaction term in the moderated regression model.

Brand Performance

This section presents the descriptive findings on Brand Performance, the dependent variable of the study. The analysis assesses respondents' perceptions of the extent to which celebrity endorsement contributes to improved brand outcomes within the Kenyan dairy industry. The descriptive statistics,

presented in Table 7, comprise the mean and standard deviation for each measurement item and provide an overview of the observed level and variability of Brand Performance among the surveyed dairy firms.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Brand Performance

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
F1	The use of celebrity trustworthiness has directly increased our dairy product sales in recent months.	4.10	0.872
F2	There has been a noticeable rise in product purchases after launching celebrity-endorsed campaigns.	4.24	0.778
F3	Celebrity trustworthiness has helped us attract new customers, leading to higher sales revenue.	4.17	0.731
F4	Our brand has gained a competitive edge in the dairy market due to celebrity-endorsed promotions.	4.02	0.730
F5	Celebrity marketing has enabled our dairy brand to increase its share compared with competitors.	4.08	0.834
F6	Celebrity trustworthiness has helped our products reach a broader customer base, expanding our market share.	4.05	0.795
F7	Customers are more likely to repurchase our dairy products because of the celebrity associated with the brand.	4.04	0.843
F8	Celebrity trustworthiness has strengthened customer emotional attachment and loyalty to our brand.	3.96	0.860
F9	Celebrity trustworthiness has increased customer trust, making them more committed to our brand over time.	4.06	0.766
F10	Celebrity trustworthiness has enhanced our brand's perceived value, resulting in sustained sales performance.	4.10	0.743
F11	A strong brand image built through credible celebrity associations has contributed to steady market-share growth.	4.22	0.670
F12	The celebrity's influence has elevated brand prestige, fostering deep customer loyalty and long-term equity.	4.10	0.654
Overall Brand Performance		4.095	—

Scale: 1.00–1.70 = Strongly Disagree; 1.80–2.50 = Disagree; 2.60–3.30 = Uncertain; 3.40–4.10 = Agree; 4.20–5.00 = Strongly Agree.

The overall mean of 4.095 indicates that respondents generally agreed that celebrity-related marketing activities were associated with favourable brand-performance outcomes. The highest-rated statement was F2, concerning increased purchases following celebrity-endorsed campaigns ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.778$), followed by F11, concerning brand image and market-share growth ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.670$). These results suggest that the perceived contribution of celebrity endorsement was strongest in relation to immediate purchasing responses and broader brand-image outcomes.

The lowest-rated item was F8, concerning emotional attachment and loyalty ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.860$). Although this remains within the agreement category, it suggests that respondents were less emphatic about emotional loyalty than about purchase-related and brand-image outcomes. This distinction is theoretically important because it suggests that celebrity endorsement may be more immediately visible in behavioural and market outcomes than in deeper relational outcomes. The results are consistent with empirical evidence that celebrity credibility can contribute to brand credibility and consumer-based brand equity. Spry, Pappu and Bettina Cornwell (2011), for example,

found that celebrity credibility can influence consumer-based brand equity through brand credibility. More recent research similarly indicates that source trustworthiness can positively influence purchase-related outcomes. The findings also accord with the meta-analytic evidence of Knoll and Matthes (2017), which shows that celebrity endorsement effects are not uniform and that theoretically relevant contextual factors influence the magnitude of endorsement effects. This is particularly relevant to the current study because the subsequent moderation analysis examines whether marketing strategy represents one such contextual condition.

4.4 Inferential Results

Correlation Results

The Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to establish the direction and strength of the associations among celebrity trustworthiness (CT), marketing strategy alignment (MSA), and brand performance (BP). The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Correlation Matrix Results

Variables	Celebrity Trustworthiness (CT)	Marketing Strategy Alignment (MSA)	Brand Performance (BP)
Celebrity Trustworthiness (CT)	1.000	.483**	.553**
Marketing Strategy Alignment (MSA)	.483**	1.000	.722**
Brand Performance (BP)	.553**	.722**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.000	.000

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings indicate that all the study variables were positively and statistically significantly associated. Celebrity trustworthiness had a moderate positive relationship with marketing strategy alignment ($r = .483$, $p < .001$) and a moderate positive relationship with brand performance ($r = .553$, $p < .001$). The results suggest that higher perceptions of celebrity trustworthiness are associated with stronger alignment between celebrity endorsement activities and the firm's marketing strategy, as well as better brand performance. Importantly, these correlations indicate association rather than causation and therefore provide preliminary evidence for subsequent regression analysis.

The strongest relationship was observed between marketing strategy alignment and brand performance ($r = .722$, $p < .001$). This is a strong positive association, indicating that firms whose celebrity endorsement activities are more closely integrated with their broader marketing strategies tend to report higher levels of brand performance. The magnitude of this relationship is substantially greater than the relationship between celebrity trustworthiness and brand performance ($r = .553$). This finding suggests that the strategic integration of celebrity endorsement may be more closely related to brand outcomes than celebrity trustworthiness considered in isolation.

The positive relationship between celebrity trustworthiness and brand performance is consistent with the Source Credibility Model, which proposes that the credibility of an endorser influences the effectiveness of persuasive communication through characteristics such as trustworthiness and expertise. In the context of the Kenyan dairy industry, a trustworthy celebrity may enhance consumers' confidence in the endorsed brand and consequently contribute to favourable brand evaluations. The finding is also broadly consistent with the Kenyan evidence reported by Munyua and Ngugi (2020) and Ondiek and Odera (2021), who associate credible endorsement and strategically managed celebrity characteristics with favourable marketing and brand outcomes.

The strong correlation between marketing strategy alignment and brand performance further supports the argument that celebrity endorsement is more effective when it is embedded within the firm's broader marketing strategy rather than implemented as an isolated promotional activity. This interpretation is consistent with the strategic-fit/contingency perspective, under which the effectiveness of a marketing instrument depends partly on its compatibility with the organization's strategic objectives, target market and other marketing activities. The finding also resonates with the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) perspective, which emphasizes consistency and coordination of brand messages across communication channels. Kyalo and Muturi (2022), for example, emphasize the importance of coordinated marketing communication in strengthening brand-related outcomes.

The correlation pattern therefore provides an important empirical foundation for the regression analysis. In particular, the relatively strong association between marketing strategy alignment and brand performance suggests that marketing strategy may play an important role in explaining variations in brand performance. However, because correlation does not establish causality, the subsequent regression and moderation analyses are necessary to determine whether celebrity trustworthiness significantly predicts brand performance and whether marketing strategy changes the strength or direction of that relationship.

Direct Effect of Celebrity Trustworthiness on Brand Performance

A simple linear regression was conducted to determine whether Celebrity Trustworthiness significantly predicted Brand Performance.

Table 9: Regression Coefficients for the Direct Relationship

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	p-value
Constant	0.969	0.239	—	4.052	<0.001
Celebrity Trustworthiness	0.328	0.065	0.325	5.066	<0.001

Dependent variable: Brand Performance

The regression results indicate that Celebrity Trustworthiness had a positive and statistically significant relationship with Brand Performance ($B = 0.328$, $\beta = 0.325$, $t = 5.066$, $p < 0.001$). The positive unstandardized coefficient indicates that a one-unit increase in the Celebrity Trustworthiness score was associated with an estimated 0.328-unit increase in Brand Performance, based on the measurement scale used in the study. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.325$) indicates a positive association of moderate magnitude within the model.

The regression equation is: $\text{Brand Performance} = 0.969 + 0.328(\text{Celebrity Trustworthiness}) + \epsilon$

The result provides inferential support for the descriptive finding that respondents associated trustworthy celebrity endorsers with stronger brand outcomes. It is also consistent with Source Credibility Theory, which predicts that credible sources enhance the persuasiveness of promotional messages. Empirically, Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) found that trustworthiness was particularly important in explaining brand-related outcomes among low-involvement consumers. Lou and Yuan (2019) similarly found that trustworthiness contributes to trust in branded content and subsequently to brand awareness and purchase intentions.

The result is therefore theoretically coherent and empirically consistent with prior research. However, the coefficient should be interpreted as evidence of a statistically significant association rather than proof that celebrity trustworthiness alone causes improved brand performance

4.5 Moderating Effect of Marketing Strategy

To determine whether Marketing Strategy changes the strength of the relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance, a moderated regression model was estimated. Moderation exists when the effect of an independent variable on an outcome depends on the level of a third variable. In regression analysis, this is tested through the statistical significance of the interaction between the predictor and the moderator.

Table 10: Model summary

Statistic	Direct Model	Moderated Model
R	.695	.718
R ²	.482	.516
Adjusted R ²	.472	.496
Std. Error of Estimate	.37187	.36329
ΔR^2	—	.034
Durbin-Watson	1.729	1.726

Table 10 shows that the direct model had an R of .695 and explained 48.2% of the variance in Brand Performance ($R^2 = .482$; adjusted $R^2 = .472$). After incorporating Marketing Strategy Alignment and the interaction terms, the moderated model improved to $R = .718$ and $R^2 = .516$, with adjusted R^2 increasing to .496. Thus, the moderated model explained an additional 3.4% of the variance in Brand Performance ($\Delta R^2 = .034$). The reduction in the standard error from .37187 to .36329 further indicates improved predictive precision. Overall, the results suggest that incorporating Marketing Strategy Alignment and its interaction with Celebrity Trustworthiness improves the explanatory power of the model. The appropriate model is:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CT + \beta_2 MS + \beta_3 (CT \times MS) + \varepsilon$$

where:

Y = Brand Performance;

CT = Celebrity Trustworthiness;

MS = Marketing Strategy; and

$CT \times MS$ = interaction between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Marketing Strategy.

The key result is that Celebrity Trustworthiness has a significant positive direct effect and a significant positive interaction with Marketing Strategy Alignment ($B = .086$, $t = 2.573$, $p = .011$). This is the appropriate basis for concluding moderation.

Table 11: Regression Results for the Moderating Effect of Marketing Strategy Alignment on the Relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance

Predictor	Direct Effect B	SE	β	t	p	Moderated Model B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	.969	.239	—	4.052	.000	1.098	.286	—	3.839	.000
Celebrity Trustworthiness (CT)	.328	.065	.325	5.066	.000	.226	.072	.224	3.146	.002
Marketing Strategy Alignment (MSA)	—	—	—	—	—	<i>Included through interaction model</i>				
CT $\times$ MSA (INTct)	—	—	—	—	—	.086	.033	.272	2.573	.011
Celebrity Expertise	-.107	.056	-.124	-1.916	.057	-.082	.056	-.095	-1.471	.143
Celebrity Physical Attractiveness	.314	.057	.347	5.559	.000	.336	.057	.371	5.947	.000
CPM	.237	.058	.269	4.090	.000	.266	.059	.301	4.477	.000
MSA $\times$ Celebrity Expertise (INTce)	—	—	—	—	—	-.016	.036	-.044	-.442	.659
MSA $\times$ Celebrity Physical Attractiveness (INTcpa)	—	—	—	—	—	-.089	.035	-.252	-2.550	.012
MSA $\times$ Celebrity-Product Match (INTcpm)	—	—	—	—	—	-.015	.036	-.043	-.412	.681

Note: Dependent variable = Brand Performance. CT = Celebrity Trustworthiness; MSA = Marketing Strategy Alignment; CPM = Celebrity-Product Match; INTct = CT $\times$ MSA; INTce = CE $\times$ MSA; INTcpa = CPA $\times$ MSA; INTcpm = CPM $\times$ MSA. $p < .05$; $p < .01$.

The regression results provide evidence of a positive and statistically significant direct relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance. In the direct-effect model, Celebrity Trustworthiness recorded an unstandardized coefficient of $B = .328$, with a standard error of .065 and a standardized coefficient of $\beta = .325$. The effect was statistically significant ($t = 5.066$, $p < .001$). This indicates that, holding the other celebrity endorsement attributes constant, a one-unit increase in perceived celebrity trustworthiness is associated with an estimated .328-unit increase in Brand Performance. The standardized coefficient further indicates that Celebrity Trustworthiness makes a relatively substantial contribution to Brand Performance compared with Celebrity Expertise and Celebrity-Product Match in the direct-effect model.

The regression finding is consistent with the correlation result, where Celebrity Trustworthiness demonstrated a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship with Brand Performance ($r = .553$, $p < .001$). The convergence of the correlation and regression findings provides consistent empirical evidence that trustworthiness is an important dimension of celebrity endorsement effectiveness in the Kenyan dairy industry. The result suggests that consumers are more likely to respond positively to brands endorsed by celebrities whom they perceive as credible, honest, dependable and believable.

The finding is consistent with the Source Credibility Model, which identifies trustworthiness as a fundamental component of an effective communication source. A credible endorser can reduce consumer uncertainty and increase acceptance of the communicated brand message. The finding also complements the Meaning Transfer Model, because favourable characteristics associated with a celebrity can become associated with the endorsed brand. Thus, a celebrity perceived as trustworthy may transfer meanings of reliability and credibility to the dairy brand, strengthening consumer

evaluations and contributing to improved brand performance. The result is also consistent with previous empirical studies. Lou and Yuan (2020), for example, demonstrated that the credibility of social media influencers, including perceptions of trustworthiness, contributes to consumers' confidence in branded content and favourable brand responses. Similarly, Schouten et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of perceived credibility and fit in determining the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. The present finding extends these arguments by demonstrating the importance of trustworthiness within the Kenyan dairy industry, thereby providing evidence from a specific African FMCG context.

The moderated regression provides stronger evidence concerning the strategic role of Celebrity Trustworthiness. After introducing the interaction between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Marketing Strategy Alignment, the coefficient for Celebrity Trustworthiness remained positive and statistically significant ($B = .226$, $\beta = .224$, $t = 3.146$, $p = .002$). More importantly, the interaction term INTct (Celebrity Trustworthiness $\times$ Marketing Strategy Alignment) was also positive and statistically significant ($B = .086$, $SE = .033$, $\beta = .272$, $t = 2.573$, $p = .011$). The significant positive interaction is the critical evidence supporting the moderating role of Marketing Strategy Alignment. It indicates that the relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance changes systematically as Marketing Strategy Alignment changes. Specifically, because the interaction coefficient is positive, stronger Marketing Strategy Alignment is associated with a stronger positive effect of Celebrity Trustworthiness on Brand Performance. This result provides a more nuanced explanation than the direct-effect finding alone. The direct model establishes that trustworthy celebrities are associated with improved Brand Performance, while the interaction effect demonstrates that the value of celebrity trustworthiness depends partly on the strategic context in which the endorsement is deployed. In practical terms, a trustworthy celebrity is likely to generate greater brand value when the endorsement is integrated into a coherent marketing strategy than when the celebrity endorsement is implemented as an isolated promotional activity. The finding is consistent with Contingency Theory, which proposes that the effectiveness of organizational practices depends on their fit with contextual and strategic conditions. Marketing Strategy Alignment can therefore be understood as an organizational condition that strengthens the effectiveness of celebrity trustworthiness. Rather than assuming that celebrity characteristics automatically produce superior brand outcomes, the finding suggests that their effectiveness is enhanced when they are strategically coordinated with the organization's marketing objectives. The finding also supports the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) perspective. When the message communicated by a trustworthy celebrity is consistent with the firm's positioning, promotional activities and other marketing communication channels, consumers are more likely to receive a coherent brand message. Consequently, the credibility of the celebrity can reinforce rather than compete with the brand's broader communication strategy.

The model statistics further reinforce the importance of the moderated relationship. The direct-effect model produced $R = .695$, $R^2 = .482$ and adjusted $R^2 = .472$. After the interaction terms were incorporated, the overall model increased to $R = .718$, $R^2 = .516$ and adjusted $R^2 = .496$. Thus, the moderated model explained 51.6% of the variance in Brand Performance, compared with 48.2% for the direct-effect model. The increase in R^2 of .034 represents an additional 3.4 percentage points of explained variance in the expanded model. The standard error of the estimate also declined from .37187 to .36329, indicating improved predictive precision. These results are consistent with the significant CT $\times$ MSA interaction and provide evidence that incorporating strategic alignment and the interaction terms improves the explanatory capacity of the model. However, it is important to

distinguish between the 3.4% increase in explained variance and the moderation test itself. The 3.4 percentage-point increase demonstrates improvement in model explanatory power, whereas the statistically significant INTct coefficient ($B = .086$, $p = .011$) provides the direct evidence that Marketing Strategy Alignment moderates the relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance.

The moderated results also provide useful comparative evidence. Celebrity Trustworthiness remained a significant predictor ($\beta = .224$, $p = .002$), while Celebrity Physical Attractiveness ($\beta = .371$, $p < .001$) and Celebrity–Product Match ($\beta = .301$, $p < .001$) also remained significant. Celebrity Expertise, however, remained statistically insignificant ($\beta = -.095$, $p = .143$). More importantly for the moderation analysis, the interaction involving Celebrity Trustworthiness was positive and significant ($\beta = .272$, $p = .011$), whereas the interaction between Marketing Strategy Alignment and Celebrity Physical Attractiveness was negative and significant ($\beta = -.252$, $p = .012$). The interactions involving Celebrity Expertise ($\beta = -.044$, $p = .659$) and Celebrity–Product Match ($\beta = -.043$, $p = .681$) were not statistically significant. This pattern suggests that Marketing Strategy Alignment does not moderate all celebrity characteristics in the same way. Rather, its moderating influence appears to be attribute-specific. In particular, strategic alignment strengthens the value of Celebrity Trustworthiness, whereas its interaction with Physical Attractiveness is negative. This is an important finding because it demonstrates that moderation should not be treated as a general enhancement of all celebrity characteristics. Instead, the strategic context appears to determine which aspects of celebrity endorsement are reinforced and which may become less influential.

The significant positive CT $\times$ MSA interaction contributes to the literature by linking source-level characteristics of celebrity endorsers with organization-level marketing strategy. Traditional applications of the Source Credibility Model emphasize characteristics of the communicator, while the Meaning Transfer Model explains how celebrity meanings may become associated with brands. The present findings suggest that these effects should also be considered within the strategic environment of the firm.

The evidence therefore supports a more integrated explanation: celebrity trustworthiness provides the source-level credibility, while marketing strategy alignment provides the organizational context that determines how effectively that credibility can be converted into brand performance. This is particularly relevant in the Kenyan dairy industry, where celebrity endorsement operates alongside broader branding, promotional and market-positioning activities.

Based on the statistically significant terms relevant to Celebrity Trustworthiness, the relationship can be expressed as:

$$\text{Brand Performance} = 1.098 + 0.226\text{CT} + 0.086(\text{CT} \times \text{MSA}) + 0.336\text{CPA} + 0.266\text{CPM} + \varepsilon$$

where:

Brand Performance = dependent variable;

CT = Celebrity Trustworthiness;

MSA = Marketing Strategy Alignment;

CT $\times$ MSA = interaction between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Marketing Strategy Alignment;

CPA = Celebrity Physical Attractiveness;

CPM = Celebrity–Product Match; and

ε = error term.

The equation demonstrates that the effect of Celebrity Trustworthiness on Brand Performance is conditional upon Marketing Strategy Alignment. The positive coefficient of 0.086 for the interaction term means that as Marketing Strategy Alignment increases, the positive relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance becomes stronger.

4.6 Hypothesis Testing

Table 12: Summary of Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis	Effect	β	t	p-value	Decision
H0 ₁ : Celebrity Trustworthiness has no significant effect on Brand Performance.	Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance	0.224*	3.146	0.002	Reject H0 ₁
H0 _{2b} : Marketing Strategy has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance.	CT $\times$ Marketing Strategy and Brand Performance	0.272	2.573	0.011	Reject H0 _{1b}

*The coefficient $\beta = 0.224$ is from the moderated model. The corresponding direct-effect model coefficient is $\beta = 0.325$ (Table 9).

Effect of Celebrity Trustworthiness on Brand Performance

The first null hypothesis stated that Celebrity Trustworthiness has no significant effect on Brand Performance in the Kenyan dairy industry. The hypothesis was rejected because Celebrity Trustworthiness was positively and significantly associated with Brand Performance in both the direct-effect model and the moderated model. In the direct-effect model, the standardized coefficient was $\beta = 0.325$ ($t = 5.066$, $p < 0.001$), while in the moderated model the coefficient remained significant at $\beta = 0.224$ ($t = 3.146$, $p = 0.002$).

The regression findings demonstrate that Celebrity Trustworthiness is a significant positive predictor of Brand Performance and that its effectiveness is further conditioned by Marketing Strategy Alignment. In the direct-effect model, Celebrity Trustworthiness had a positive and significant effect on Brand Performance ($B = .328$, $\beta = .325$, $t = 5.066$, $p < .001$). This finding was consistent with the significant bivariate relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance ($r = .553$, $p < .001$), providing convergent evidence that perceived endorser credibility is an important determinant of brand outcomes in the Kenyan dairy industry. In the moderated model, Celebrity Trustworthiness remained significant ($B = .226$, $\beta = .224$, $t = 3.146$, $p = .002$), while the interaction between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Marketing Strategy Alignment was positive and statistically significant ($B = .086$, $\beta = .272$, $t = 2.573$, $p = .011$). The significant positive interaction demonstrates that Marketing Strategy Alignment strengthens the relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance.

The moderation finding provides an important extension to the Source Credibility and Meaning Transfer perspectives. Although celebrity trustworthiness can directly contribute to favourable brand outcomes, its effectiveness is not independent of the firm's strategic context. Rather, the positive effect of trustworthiness becomes stronger when celebrity endorsement is aligned with the organization's broader marketing strategy. The finding is consistent with a contingency perspective because it

demonstrates that the effectiveness of a marketing resource depends partly on the strategic conditions under which it is deployed. It is also compatible with the Integrated Marketing Communication perspective, since strategic consistency enables the credibility and positive meanings associated with the celebrity to reinforce the firm's broader brand message.

The increase in explanatory power from $R^2 = .482$ in the direct model to $R^2 = .516$ in the moderated model further indicates that the expanded model provides a stronger explanation of Brand Performance. The additional 3.4 percentage points of explained variance, together with the significant $CT \times MSA$ interaction, indicate that incorporating strategic alignment provides additional explanatory value beyond the direct effects of celebrity endorsement attributes. The results therefore suggest that dairy firms should not evaluate celebrity endorsers solely on personal characteristics such as trustworthiness, but should also consider the degree to which the celebrity's image and communication can be integrated with the firm's broader marketing strategy. Overall, the evidence supports the conclusion that Marketing Strategy Alignment significantly and positively moderates the relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance.

The finding is consistent with Source Credibility Theory and previous empirical research. Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) demonstrated that celebrity trustworthiness can enhance brand attitude, brand credibility and purchase intention, particularly among low-involvement consumers. Lou and Yuan (2019) likewise demonstrated that trustworthiness contributes to trust in branded content and subsequently to brand awareness and purchase intention. Hussain et al. (2020) further showed that celebrity trust positively influences advertising and brand credibility.

The present study extends these findings to the Kenyan dairy context by demonstrating a statistically significant relationship between perceived celebrity trustworthiness and broader brand-performance outcomes. The result is particularly relevant for dairy products because consumers may use source credibility as a heuristic when evaluating frequently purchased consumer goods. Nevertheless, because the study employed cross-sectional survey data, the finding should be interpreted as an observed statistical relationship rather than definitive causal evidence.

Moderating Effect of Marketing Strategy

The second null hypothesis stated that Marketing Strategy does not significantly moderate the relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance. The hypothesis was rejected because the interaction term between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Marketing Strategy was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.272$, $t = 2.573$, $p = 0.011$).

The positive interaction coefficient indicates that Marketing Strategy strengthens the positive association between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance. In substantive terms, a trustworthy celebrity is likely to be more effective when the endorsement is supported by strategically coherent targeting, communication, channel consistency, cultural fit and alignment with customer needs.

This finding is consistent with research emphasizing the importance of contextual and relational conditions in celebrity endorsement effectiveness. The meta-analysis by Knoll and Matthes (2017) demonstrated that endorsement effects vary according to theoretically relevant moderators rather than being uniformly positive across all contexts. Research on celebrity and influencer endorsements has likewise demonstrated that credibility and identification mechanisms can influence advertising effectiveness.

The present finding therefore contributes an important contextual explanation: celebrity trustworthiness may constitute an important source of brand credibility, but its effect is amplified

when endorsement activities are strategically aligned with the broader marketing programme. This provides a more nuanced interpretation of Source Credibility Theory by positioning credibility within the strategic context in which the persuasive communication occurs.

5. Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that Celebrity Trustworthiness is positively and significantly associated with Brand Performance among dairy firms in Kenya. Respondents consistently rated honesty, authenticity, sincerity, reliability and dependability of celebrity endorsers highly, with an overall mean of 4.097. The regression analysis provided further evidence of a significant positive relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance ($\beta = 0.325$, $p < 0.001$). The findings support the central proposition of Source Credibility Theory that the perceived credibility of a communication source influences the effectiveness of persuasive messages. The results are particularly consistent with previous evidence showing that trustworthiness can be a particularly influential dimension of source credibility in low-involvement consumption contexts. The study further concludes that Marketing Strategy significantly moderates the relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance. The positive interaction coefficient ($\beta = 0.272$, $p = 0.011$) indicates that the effectiveness of celebrity trustworthiness is enhanced when endorsement activities are implemented within a strategically coherent marketing programme. Consequently, celebrity trustworthiness should not be treated as an isolated promotional attribute. Its effectiveness depends partly on whether the endorsement is aligned with customer needs, brand positioning, communication channels and broader marketing objectives.

The findings therefore make two contributions. First, they provide empirical evidence that perceived celebrity trustworthiness is associated with brand-performance outcomes in the Kenyan dairy industry. Second, they demonstrate that the relationship is conditional on marketing strategy, suggesting that endorsement effectiveness is partly contingent upon organizational context. The latter finding extends the conventional application of Source Credibility Theory by demonstrating the importance of the strategic environment surrounding the source of the message.

5.2 Managerial Recommendations

Dairy firms should place greater emphasis on perceived trustworthiness when selecting celebrity endorsers. Selection decisions should consider the endorser's reputation for honesty, consistency, authenticity and dependability rather than relying primarily on popularity or visibility. This recommendation is supported by evidence that trustworthiness can be more influential than other dimensions of source credibility under certain consumption conditions.

Second, firms should integrate celebrity endorsement into their broader marketing strategy. The significant interaction between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Marketing Strategy indicates that credibility is more likely to translate into stronger brand outcomes when endorsement activities are strategically aligned with customer needs, brand values, communication channels and positioning objectives.

Third, firms should place particular emphasis on message consistency across communication platforms. The descriptive results showed strong agreement regarding the importance of coherent celebrity messages. Consequently, celebrity endorsements should communicate a consistent brand

proposition across television, radio, social media, point-of-sale communication and other relevant channels.

Fourth, firms should assess celebrity-brand congruence before entering endorsement contracts. Previous research indicates that credibility, similarity, identification and congruence can influence endorsement effectiveness. Celebrity selection should therefore consider whether the celebrity's public identity, values and audience are compatible with the brand's intended positioning.

Finally, managers should monitor endorsement effectiveness beyond immediate sales. The relatively lower rating for emotional attachment and loyalty compared with purchase and brand-image indicators suggests that short-term promotional effects may not automatically translate into deeper customer relationships. Firms should therefore evaluate both short-term performance indicators and longer-term measures such as customer retention, loyalty, brand equity and perceived credibility.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

The findings reinforce Source Credibility Theory by demonstrating that trustworthiness constitutes an important mechanism through which an endorser can influence brand-related outcomes. The significant direct relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Brand Performance provides empirical support for the proposition that consumers' evaluations of the source of a message can shape their evaluations of the endorsed brand.

However, the significant moderating effect of Marketing Strategy provides a more nuanced theoretical interpretation. The results indicate that the effect of source credibility does not operate independently of organizational context. Instead, the relationship between trustworthiness and brand performance is stronger under more favourable strategic conditions. This suggests that Source Credibility Theory can be enriched by incorporating the strategic context within which source credibility is activated.

This interpretation is consistent with evidence showing that celebrity endorsement effects vary according to contextual and theoretically relevant conditions rather than being universally positive. Thus, the study contributes to endorsement theory by moving beyond the question of whether a trustworthy celebrity is effective to the more strategically relevant question of when and under what conditions celebrity trustworthiness is most effective.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

Future research should examine additional celebrity characteristics, including expertise, attractiveness, popularity, familiarity, relatability and cultural relevance. This would permit comparison of the relative contribution of different source-credibility dimensions to brand outcomes. Longitudinal research would also be useful for determining whether the effects associated with celebrity trustworthiness persist over time. The present cross-sectional design captures perceptions at one point in time and therefore cannot determine whether endorsement effects remain after the campaign has ended. Future studies could also compare traditional celebrities with social media influencers. Existing evidence suggests that identification, similarity and trust may operate differently across celebrity and influencer contexts. Further research should also examine other boundary conditions, including brand-celebrity congruence, consumer involvement, brand reputation, advertising disclosure, digital-media platform and consumer characteristics. Such studies would provide a more comprehensive explanation of the circumstances under which celebrity endorsement

contributes to sustainable brand performance. Finally, future researchers should consider longitudinal and experimental designs to complement survey evidence. Experimental designs could provide stronger evidence concerning causal relationships, while longitudinal studies could establish whether the observed relationships translate into sustained improvements in sales, market share, customer loyalty and brand equity.

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