



The Effect of the Perceived Value of Sports and Non-Sports Products on Customers' Purchase Intention Based on the Mental Involvement in Endorser-Product Congruence

Kaveh Mirani ¹, Farshad Tojar * ¹, Negar Arazeshi ²

1. Department of Sports Management, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
2. Department of Motor Behavior, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

Corresponding Author Email: farshad.tojari@gmail.com



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ABSTRACT

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Endorser Product, Incongruence, Celebrity Endorsements, involvement, Athlete Endorsements, Congruence

One of the tactics that makes products appear distinctive and valuable—encouraging customers to repurchase—is the use of celebrity endorsements. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the effect of the perceived value of sports and non-sports products on customers' purchase intention based on mental involvement in endorser-product congruence. The research method was descriptive-correlational. The statistical population consisted of two parts. In the first part, endorsers and products were identified: Ali Daei and Shahrbanoo Mansourian were selected as famous sports endorsers, while Amin Hayayi and Elham Hamidi were chosen as famous non-sports endorsers. The Majid brand was selected as the sports product, and the Novin Charm brand was chosen as the non-sports product. The sampling method for this stage was purposive. The second part included customers of both sports and non-sports products, categorized into high and low mental involvement groups. Stratified random sampling was applied, and the sample size was estimated at 420 participants. Data were collected using the Perceived Value Questionnaire by Lee et al (2021), the Purchase Intention Scale by Lee et al (2021), and the Mental Involvement Scale by Bian and Moutinho (2011). Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, AMOS, and SmartPLS software. According to the findings, the endorsement of sports and non-sports products by sports celebrities had a stronger influence compared to endorsements by non-sports celebrities. Furthermore, it was found that sports celebrities' endorsements of sports and non-sports products could enhance the purchase intention of customers with both high and low levels of mental involvement.

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important ways to introduce sports products and services to consumers is through promotion (Matic et al., 2019). As a key component of the marketing mix, promotion plays a vital role in the marketing strategies of organizations and companies by building customer relationships, launching new products or services, and shaping or changing customer perceptions toward the organization (Shirahmad et al., 2021). Among the various promotional strategies, celebrity endorsement has emerged as one of the most effective tactics that make products appear distinctive and valuable, thereby encouraging customers to repurchase (Abdaziz et al., 2019). Consequently, thousands of endorsement-based advertisements are broadcast daily across multiple media platforms, including television, magazines, and social media (Shan et al., 2020; Macheka et al., 2024). Among these advertisements, the use of athlete endorsers has grown significantly compared to other types of celebrities (Gerritsen & Van Rheeën, 2017; Brown et al., 2024). Studies by Kunkel et al. (2019) and Pulliam (2024) revealed that athlete endorsements for sports products have a stronger influence than endorsements by non-athlete celebrities. Therefore, from an organizational cost perspective, companies must carefully select the most appropriate endorsers to maximize promotional effectiveness while considering budget constraints (Koernig & Boyd, 2009). In marketing research, the concept of endorser–product congruence has been widely explored (Liang & Lin, 2018). For instance, Carlson et al. (2020), Li et al. (2023), and Purwanto & Praditya (2024) demonstrated that congruence between endorsers and products can significantly enhance consumers’ purchase intentions. However, not all endorsers create the same level of influence. When a celebrity endorses a sports product, they may fail to effectively convey the product’s perceived value. Therefore, companies must

consider several critical factors when selecting endorsers: (1) endorser–product congruence or incongruence, (2) consumers’ mental involvement, and (3) the endorser’s gender. Many studies in sports management and marketing have examined how endorser–product congruence (Liu, 2007; Moslemipur, 2015; Jamshidi et al., 2017; Liang & Lin, 2018; Parker et al., 2018) and incongruence (Lee & Thorson, 2008; Törn, 2012; Srivastava & Arora, 2014; Esmaeilpour et al., 2017) influence consumer behavior. Endorser–product congruence is typically determined through consumers’ evaluations of information related to both the endorser and the product (Sharma & Klein, 2020). Moreover, when there is a strong match-up between endorsers and products, consumers with low mental involvement are more easily influenced by peripheral cues (Park & Lin, 2020), whereas consumers with high mental involvement are more attentive to central product features that go beyond surface-level attributes (Liang, 2018). Highly involved consumers tend to critically assess product quality, while those with low involvement rely more on external or environmental cues.

When the perceived value between endorsers and products is inconsistent, the degree of mental involvement can moderate the relationship between endorser–product incongruence and purchase intention. Since consumers often rely on value judgments, perceived value becomes a key determinant of purchase intention (Chang, 2017; Liang & Lin, 2018; Carlson et al., 2020). Another important consideration in endorser selection is gender. Research by Stafford et al. (2003) indicated that male and female endorsers differ in their communication styles: male endorsers tend to present factual information, whereas female endorsers often use interpretive and expressive approaches that extend beyond factual accuracy. Similarly, studies by Wu and Ji (2021) and Sufi et al. (2022) found that the gender and attractiveness

of female athlete endorsers can increase consumers' purchase intentions, while Bhutada and Rollins (2015) argued that gender may not always have a significant effect on consumer attitudes. Given these insights, companies should recognize the significant role of celebrity endorsements in promoting and increasing product sales. However, since the concept of endorsement is still relatively unfamiliar in Iran, there remains a lack of empirical research in this domain. Therefore, this study aims

to examine the effect of perceived value of sports and non-sports products on customers' purchase intentions, considering the moderating role of mental involvement and the gender of endorsers. The researcher hopes that the findings of this study will contribute to filling this research gap and provide a theoretical foundation for future investigations on endorser-product relationships in the context of the Iranian market.

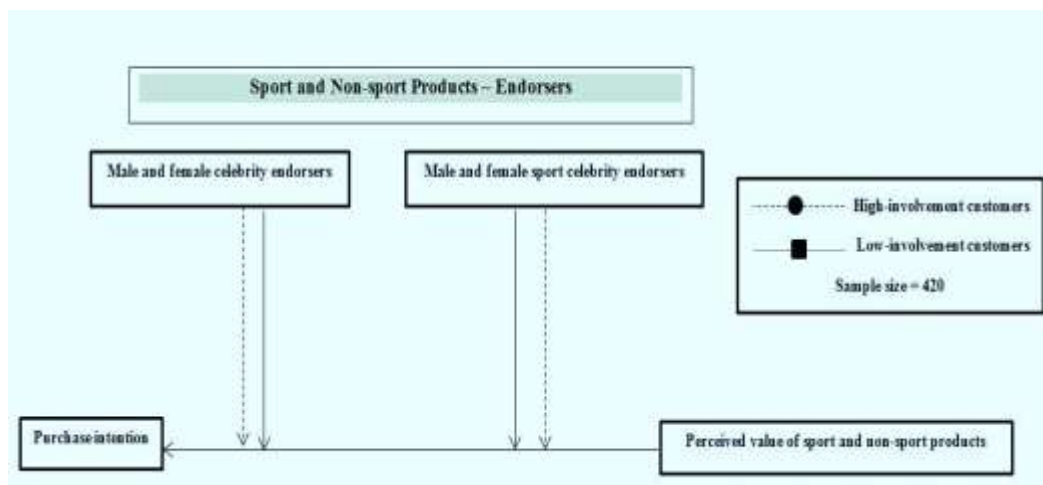


Figure 1. Conceptual research model

2. Methodology

First Part of the Statistical Population

The present study is a descriptive-correlational research and falls within the category of applied studies, conducted through a field research approach. The statistical population of this study consisted of two parts. The first part, which was

designed to select the endorsers and products, included 40 experts in sport marketing, graduates and Ph.D. students of sport marketing, and sport marketing consultants. The sampling method in this stage was purposeful sampling (Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of the Expert Sample for Selecting Endorsers and Products

No.	Field of Expertise	Position	Education	Gender	Number
1–10	Sport Marketing	Faculty Member	Ph.D.	Male/Female	10
11–20	Sport Marketing	Graduate in the Field	Ph.D.	Male/Female	25
21–35	Sport Marketing	Ph.D. Student	Ph.D. Candidate	Male/Female	
36–40	Sport Marketing	Marketing Consultant	M.A./Ph.D.	Male/Female	5

Selection of Endorsers and Products

To select the endorsers, 40 celebrity endorsers were chosen, including 20 sport celebrity endorsers (10 males and 10 females) and 20 non-sport celebrity endorsers (10 males and 10 females) who met the required criteria of the study trustworthiness, stardom, attractiveness, popularity, and number of followers on social media. For product selection, 20

products were identified, consisting of 10 sport-related products and 10 non-sport-related products that met the study's criteria of being domestically produced, uniqueness and benefit, quality, and customer relationship management.

Based on the voting conducted by the first group of the statistical population, among the 10 male sport celebrity endorsers, Ali Daei received 40 votes and

was selected as the male sport celebrity endorser. Among the 10 female sport celebrity endorsers, Shahrbanoo Mansourian received 29 votes and was selected as the female sport celebrity endorser. Similarly, among the 10 male non-sport celebrity endorsers, Amin Hayai received 40 votes and was chosen as the male non-sport celebrity endorser, while among the 10 female non-sport celebrity

endorsers, Elham Hamidi received 30 votes and was selected as the female non-sport celebrity endorser. Finally, among the 10 sport-related products, the Merooj (Majid) brand received 40 votes and was selected as the sport product, while among the 10 non-sport-related products, the Novin Charm brand received 37 votes and was selected as the non-sport product (Table 2).

Table 2. Characteristics of Sport and Non-Sport Endorsers and Products Based on Votes

Endorser Type	Gender	Endorser Name	Number of Votes	Product Type	Product Name	Number of Votes
Sport	Male	Ali Daei	40	Sport	Majid Sportswear	40
	Female	Shahrbanoo Mansourian	29			
Celebrity	Male	Amin Hayai	40	Non-Sport	Novin Charm	37
	Female	Elham Hamidi	30			

Second Part of the Statistical Population

The second part of the statistical population consisted of product customers (sport and non-sport), including customers with high and low involvement. The sampling method for high-involvement customers was stratified random sampling. These individuals were selected through the following procedure: at the beginning of the demographic section of the questionnaire, a dichotomous question (Yes/No) was asked to determine whether participants were familiar with sport and non-sport products. For increased accuracy, participants were also asked whether these products were present on social media. Individuals who were familiar with the products, followed them on social media, and met the involvement criteria based on questionnaire responses were classified as high-involvement

customers. Similarly, the sampling method for low-involvement customers was also stratified random sampling. These individuals were selected as follows: a dichotomous question (Yes/No) was asked regarding familiarity with sport and non-sport products. Additionally, participants were asked about the presence of these products on social media. Those who were not familiar with the products and did not follow them on social media, and whose involvement level was assessed via the questionnaire, were classified as low-involvement customers. Finally, to estimate the sample size, a sample size determination software was used, and the total sample size was estimated to be 420 participants, including 210 high-involvement customers and 210 low-involvement customers (Table 3).

Table 3. Sample Size Estimation

Error Rate	Power	Effect Size	Sample Size
0.05	0.90	0.05	420

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using four questionnaires: a demographic questionnaire including gender, marital status, age, educational level, income, and familiarity with products; the Perceived Value Questionnaire by Lee et al. (2021) with 16 items; the Purchase Intention Questionnaire by Lee et al. (2021) with 4 items; and the Involvement Questionnaire by Bain and Moutini (2011) with 8 items. After receiving feedback from 12 sport management experts regarding face and content

validity and making the necessary revisions, all questionnaires were prepared using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”). In a pilot study, the reliability of the questionnaires was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha, yielding the following values: Perceived Value = 0.84, Purchase Intention = 0.81, and Involvement = 0.86.

Finally, the questionnaires were distributed among the research sample in two sections: demographic information and the main

questionnaire items. For data analysis, descriptive and inferential statistical methods were applied. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to assess the construct validity of the measurement instruments (Table 4). Based on skewness and

kurtosis values, which ranged between -2 and +2, the data were considered to follow a normal distribution. All analyses were conducted using SPSS, SPSS SamplePower (for sample size calculation), AMOS (for CFA), and SmartPLS.

3. Findings of the Research

Table 4. Measurement Equations of the Questionnaires

Variable	Component	Indicator	Factor Loading	Critical Value	Explained Variance	Significance Level
Perceived Value	Quality Value	Item 1	0.68	–	0.46	–
		Item 2	0.75	10.382	0.57	0.001
		Item 3	0.67	8.234	0.44	0.001
		Item 4	0.69	7.837	0.47	0.001
	Social Value	Item 5	0.74	–	0.42	–
		Item 6	0.78	7.681	0.61	0.001
		Item 7	0.89	7.026	0.79	0.001
		Item 8	0.85	7.189	0.72	0.001
	Price Value	Item 9	0.83	–	0.68	–
		Item 10	0.82	7.426	0.66	0.001
		Item 11	0.66	7.930	0.43	0.001
		Item 12	0.72	7.077	0.51	0.001
	Innovation Value	Item 13	0.78	–	0.61	–
		Item 14	0.84	7.521	0.71	0.001
		Item 15	0.62	7.843	0.39	0.001
		Item 16	0.60	6.901	0.36	0.001
Purchase Intention		Item 1	0.88	–	0.77	–
		Item 2	0.93	8.452	0.87	0.001
		Item 3	0.90	6.147	0.81	0.001
		Item 4	0.87	9.326	0.76	0.001
Involvement		Item 1	0.52	–	0.28	–
		Item 2	0.79	11.265	0.62	0.001
		Item 3	0.76	10.674	0.58	0.001
		Item 4	0.79	10.281	0.63	0.001
		Item 5	0.85	11.060	0.72	0.001
		Item 6	0.84	11.007	0.70	0.001
		Item 7	0.84	10.458	0.70	0.001
		Item 8	0.68	9.861	0.46	0.001

Descriptive Results

The descriptive findings showed that, out of the 420 participants, the majority (66.2%) were male, while the remaining (33.8%) were female. Among these participants, 58.6% were single and 41.4% were married. Regarding age distribution, the largest group of participants (33.1%) was aged 31 to 40 years, while the smallest group (5.2%) was under 18

years old. In terms of education, most participants (33.6%) held a master's degree, whereas the smallest proportion (9.5%) had a Ph.D. Finally, in terms of monthly income, the majority of participants (43.3%) earned between 9 and 11 million Iranian Rials, while the smallest proportion (1.9%) earned less than 5 million Iranian Rials per month.

Table 5. Multicollinearity Assessment Using Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Variable	Tolerance	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)
Perceived Value	0.748	1.337
Purchase Intention	0.797	1.254
Involvement	0.762	1.452

Based on the values estimated in the table above (tolerance > 0.40 and VIF < 2.5), it can be concluded that the assumption of no multicollinearity among these variables is satisfied.

Table 6. Model Evaluation Indices

Involvement	Endorser	Gender	Product	Variable	AVE	Composite Reliability	Rho-A	Cronbach's Alpha
High	Sport Celebrity	Male	Sport	Perceived Value	0.508	0.942	0.937	0.935
				Purchase Intention	0.802	0.942	0.918	0.918
				High Involvement	0.644	0.935	0.923	0.921
		Female		Perceived Value	0.508	0.942	0.937	0.935
				Purchase Intention	0.802	0.942	0.919	0.918
				Low Involvement	0.762	0.968	0.972	0.956
High	Celebrity	Male	Sport	Perceived Value	0.633	0.965	0.962	0.960
				Purchase Intention	0.823	0.949	0.928	0.928
				High Involvement	0.759	0.961	0.956	0.954
		Female		Perceived Value	0.508	0.942	0.937	0.935
				Purchase Intention	0.802	0.942	0.919	0.918
				Low Involvement	0.598	0.855	0.777	0.773
High	Celebrity	Male	Non-Sport	Perceived Value	0.589	0.923	0.974	0.941
				Purchase Intention	0.845	0.936	0.913	0.912
				High Involvement	0.623	0.952	0.945	0.941
		Female		Perceived Value	0.674	0.978	0.956	0.953
				Purchase Intention	0.769	0.985	0.947	0.945
				Low Involvement	0.762	0.971	0.936	0.930
High	Sport Celebrity	Male	Non-Sport	Perceived Value	0.714	0.852	0.932	0.789
				Purchase Intention	0.632	0.874	0.987	0.963
				High Involvement	0.654	0.963	0.966	0.896
		Female		Perceived Value	0.625	0.910	0.974	0.923
				Purchase Intention	0.698	0.974	0.936	0.901
				Low Involvement	0.712	0.945	0.875	0.986

The model evaluation indices of the structural equation model indicated that the data fit the model

adequately, and all indices confirmed the goodness-of-fit of the structural model.

Table 7. Divergent Validity Matrix Using the Fornell and Larcker Method

Involvement	Endorser	Gender	Product	Variable	Perceived Value	Purchase Intention	Involvement
High	Sport Celebrity	Male	Sport	Perceived Value	0.712	–	–
				Purchase Intention	0.624	0.896	–
		Female		High Involvement	0.437	0.439	0.896
				Perceived Value	0.714	–	–
Low		Male		Purchase Intention	0.624	0.895	–
				Female	Low Involvement	0.321	0.519
High	Celebrity	Male	Sport	Perceived Value	0.795	–	–
				Purchase Intention	0.718	0.907	–
		Female		High Involvement	0.483	0.351	0.870
				Perceived Value	0.712	–	–
Low		Male		Purchase Intention	0.359	0.624	–
				Female	Low Involvement	0.417	0.519
High	Celebrity	Male	Non-Sport	Perceived Value	0.745	–	–
				Purchase Intention	0.698	0.745	–
		Female		High Involvement	0.423	0.521	0.796
				Perceived Value	0.651	–	–
Low		Male		Purchase Intention	0.742	0.863	–
				Female	Low Involvement	0.469	0.568
High	Sport Celebrity	Male	Non-Sport	Perceived Value	0.896	–	–
				Purchase Intention	0.841	0.896	–
		Female		High Involvement	0.523	0.589	0.741
				Perceived Value	0.712	–	–
Low		Male		Purchase Intention	0.456	0.742	–
				Female	Low Involvement	0.456	0.519

The perceived value and purchase intention variables exhibit satisfactory correlations,

indicating adequate divergent validity and a good fit of the measurement model.

**Table 8.** Measurement, Structural, and Overall Model Evaluation Indicators

Cognitive Involvement	Endorser Type	Gender	Product Type	Model Section	Indicator Name	Abbreviation	Final Model
High	Sport Celebrity	Male	Sport	Measurement	Communality Values	CVCom	0.598
				Structural	Coefficient of Determination	R ²	0.422
					Effect Size	f ²	0.393
					Redundancy Value	CVRed	0.358
		Overall		Standardized Root Mean Square Residual	SRMR	0.049	
		Female		Measurement	Communality Values	CVCom	0.942
				Structural	Coefficient of Determination	R ²	0.397
					Effect Size	f ²	0.528
Redundancy Value	CVRed		0.436				
Low	Female	Overall	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual	SRMR	0.047		
		Measurement	Communality Values	CVCom	0.683		
		Structural	Coefficient of Determination	R ²	0.516		
			Effect Size	f ²	0.564		
Redundancy Value	CVRed		0.416				
High	Celebrity	Male	Sport	Overall	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual	SRMR	0.024
				Measurement	Communality Values	CVCom	0.651
				Structural	Coefficient of Determination	R ²	0.471
					Effect Size	f ²	0.564
Redundancy Value	CVRed	0.359					
Low	Female	Overall		Standardized Root Mean Square Residual	SRMR	0.032	
		Measurement		Communality Values	CVCom	0.598	
		Structural		Coefficient of Determination	R ²	0.478	
			Effect Size	f ²	0.352		
Redundancy Value	CVRed		0.398				
High	Celebrity	Female	Non-sport	Overall	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual	SRMR	0.0369
				Measurement	Communality Values	CVCom	0.875
				Structural	Coefficient of Determination	R ²	0.475
					Effect Size	f ²	0.359
Redundancy Value	CVRed	0.487					
Low	Female	Overall		Standardized Root Mean Square Residual	SRMR	0.042	
		Measurement		Communality Values	CVCom	0.562	
		Structural		Coefficient of Determination	R ²	0.452	
			Effect Size	f ²	0.478		
Redundancy Value	CVRed		0.523				
High	Sport Celebrity	Male	Non-sport	Overall	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual	SRMR	0.046
				Measurement	Communality Values	CVCom	0.569
				Structural	Coefficient of Determination	R ²	0.489
					Effect Size	f ²	0.493
Redundancy Value	CVRed	0.412					
Low	Female	Overall		Standardized Root Mean Square Residual	SRMR	0.052	

The evaluation indices of the measurement, structural, and overall models—considering the acceptable range of these indicators—collectively

demonstrate that the proposed conceptual model is well supported by the research data. In other words,

the data exhibit a satisfactory fit with the hypothesized model.

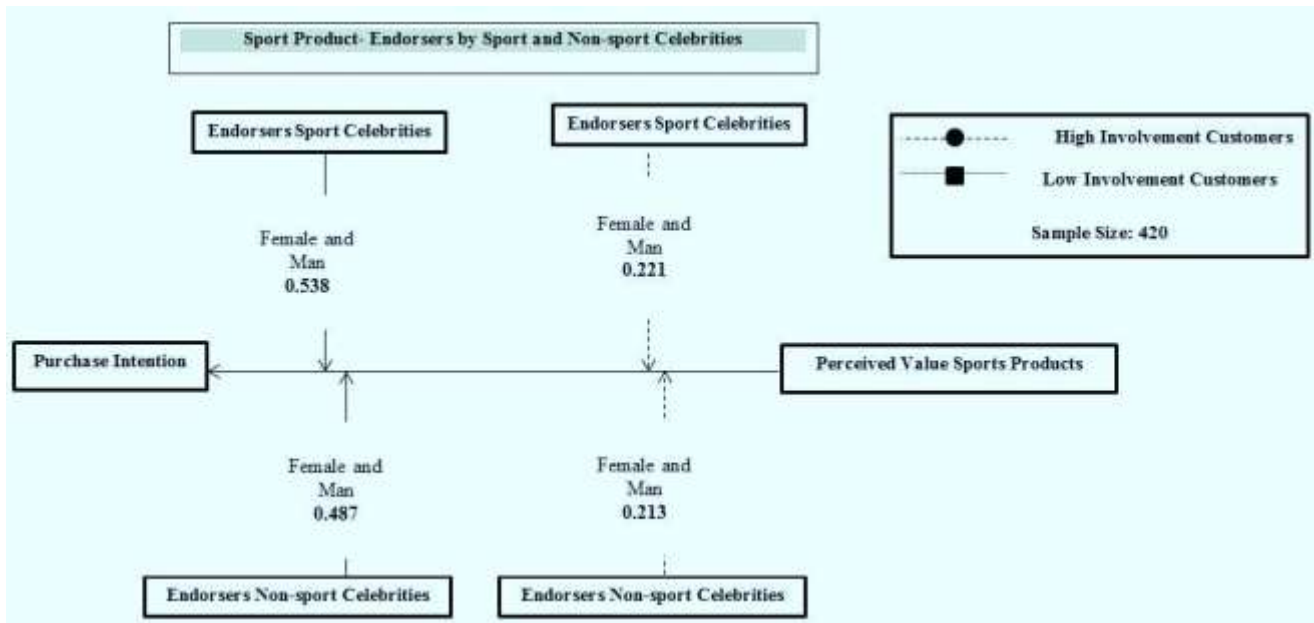


Figure 2. Effects of perceived value of sports product on customers' purchase intention in terms of mental involvement of endorser fit

Table 9. Results of Structural Model Evaluation

Level of Involvement	Endorser Type	Product Type	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Moderator	Path Coefficient	t-value	Significance Level
High	Sports Celebrity Male	Sports Product	Perceived Value	Purchase Intention	High	0.221	2.500	0.001
Low	Sports Celebrity Female				Low	0.538	6.961	0.001
High	Celebrity Male				High	0.213	2.238	0.002
Low	Celebrity Female				Low	0.487	6.831	0.001

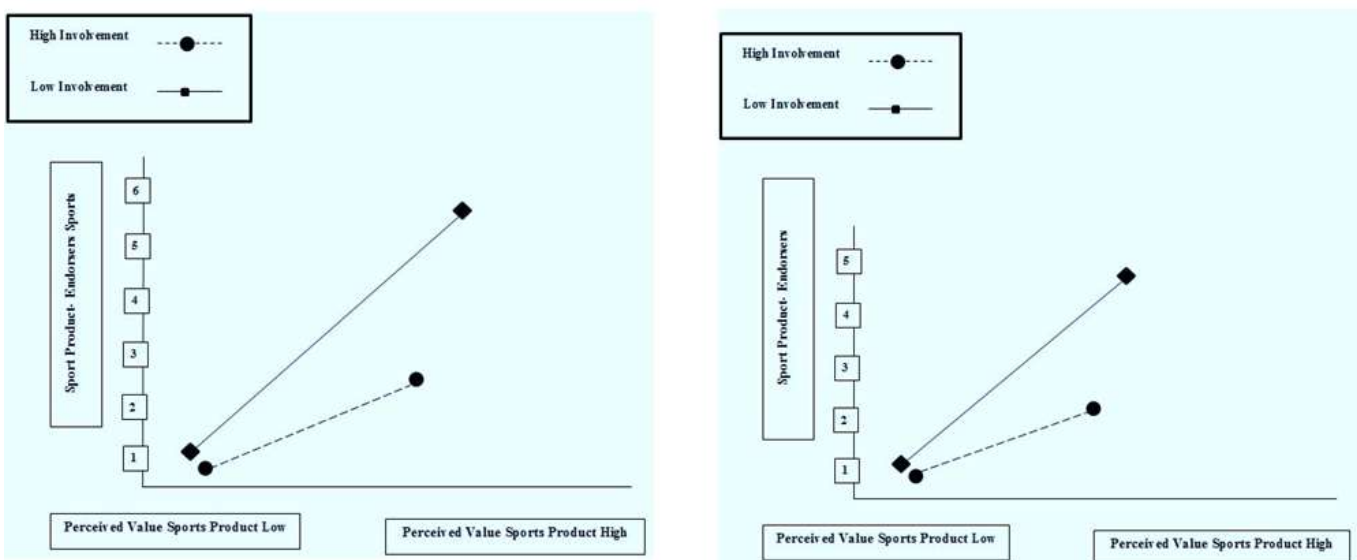


Figure 3. Effects of perceived value of sports product on customers' purchase intention in terms of mental involvement of endorser fit

The results indicate that the moderating path coefficient of low mental involvement ($\beta = 0.538$) and high mental involvement ($\beta = 0.221$) between the effect of perceived value of sports products on customers' purchase intention in sports celebrity endorsers is higher than the moderating path

coefficient of low mental involvement ($\beta = 0.487$) and high mental involvement ($\beta = 0.213$) between the effect of perceived value of sports products on customers' purchase intention in celebrity endorsers.

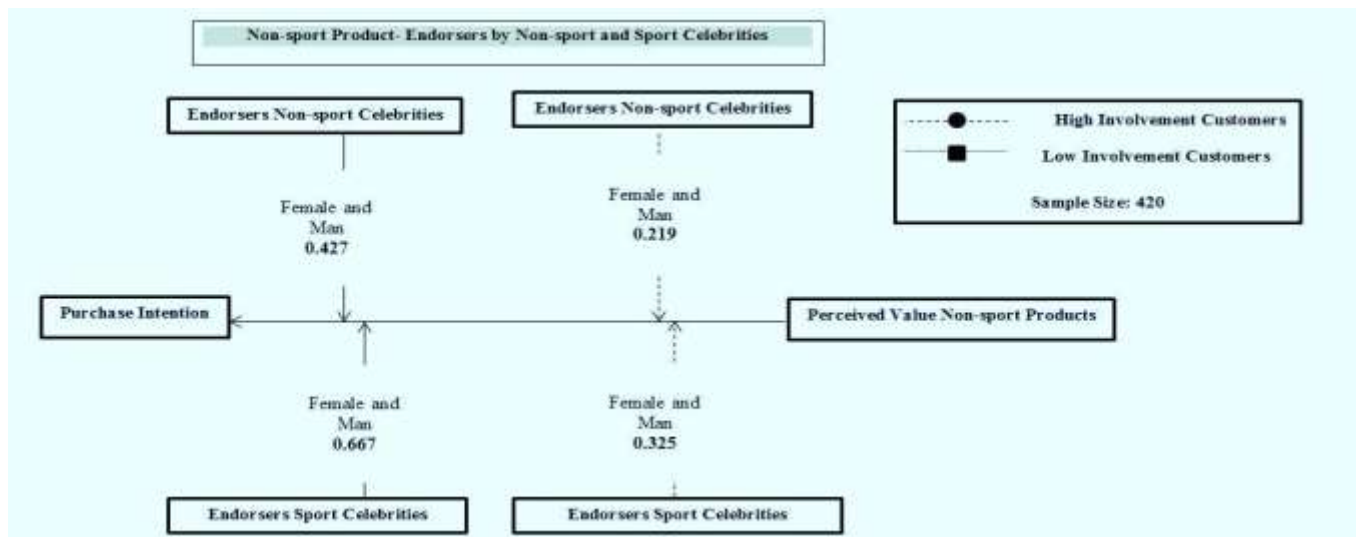


Figure 4. Effects of perceived value of non-sports product on customers' purchase intention in terms of mental involvement of endorser fit

Table 10. Structural model evaluation results

Level of Involvement	Endorser Type	Product Type	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Moderator	Path Coefficient	t-value	Significance Level
High	Celebrity Male	non-Sports Product	Perceived Value	Purchase Intention	High	0.219	4.328	0.001
Low	Celebrity Female				Low	0.427	8.553	0.001
High	Sports Celebrity Male				High	0.325	3.488	0.001
Low	Sports Celebrity Female				Low	0.667	3.604	0.001

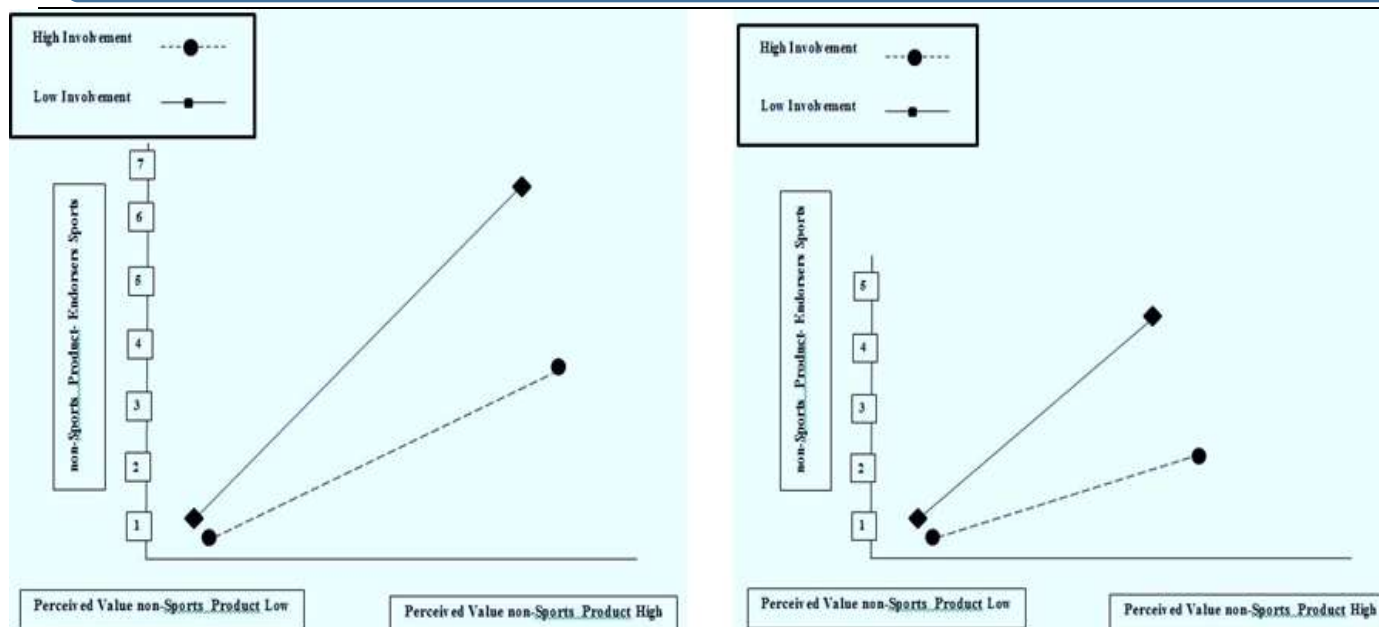


Figure 5. Effects of perceived value of non-sports product on customers' purchase intention in terms of mental involvement of endorser fit

The results show that the moderating path coefficient of low mental involvement ($\beta = 0.667$) and high mental involvement ($\beta = 0.325$) between the effect of perceived value of non-sport products on customers' purchase intention in sports celebrity endorsers is higher than the moderating path

coefficient of low mental involvement ($\beta = 0.427$) and high mental involvement ($\beta = 0.219$) between the effect of perceived value of non-sport products on customers' purchase intention in celebrity endorsers.

4. Discussion and conclusion

In a market where advertising plays a vital role in shaping customers' purchases, companies must employ every available tool to influence customer motivations and create purchase desire through effective and creative advertising ideas. Companies make every effort to elevate their brands and occupy customers' minds (Kite, 2015). It appears that celebrity endorsement is one of the factors influencing purchase intention; therefore, the present study was conducted to The Effect of the Perceived Value of Sports and Non-Sports Products on Customers' Purchase Intention Based on the Mental Involvement in Endorser-Product Congruence examine.

The results showed that the perceived value of sport products affects customers' purchase intention depending on involvement and endorser-product fit. The moderating path coefficients for low involvement ($\beta = 0.538$) and high involvement ($\beta = 0.221$) in the effect of perceived value of sport

products on customers' purchase intention for sports-celebrity endorsers are greater than the moderating path coefficients for low involvement ($\beta = 0.487$) and high involvement ($\beta = 0.213$) for (non-sport) celebrity endorsers. Therefore, it can be concluded that sports celebrity endorsement on sport products has a greater effect than (general) celebrity endorsement on sport products. Moreover, the results indicated that sports celebrity endorsement of sport products can increase purchase intention among customers with low involvement compared to those with high involvement. Finally, it was found that sports celebrity endorsement can also change the purchase intention of highly involved customers. These findings are consistent with Liu (2007), Liang et al. (2011), Cang (2017), Liang & Lin (2018), Parker et al. (2018), Kunkel et al. (2019), and Jamshidi et al. (2018).

To explain these results, based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty et al, 1983), there are two

persuasive routes—(1) central routes and (2) peripheral routes—that change consumer attitudes. The central route model is based on differences between personal and situational factors and likely operates along a continuous persuasion path (Petty et al., 1983). Consumers' attitudes toward products are influenced by persuasive information about product attributes. Therefore, consumers process information that is rational and objective. If this persuasive information is convincing, consumers are likely to respond positively; otherwise, a negative effect may occur (Liang & Lin, 2018). Through the central route, consumers seek information about endorsers and products to evaluate the offering. Consequently, when there is fit between athlete endorsers and sport products, consumers—after processing the information—may conclude that the product's value meets their expectations (Liang et al., 2018). Previous studies have shown that sport endorser–sport product fit positively affects purchase intention and brand attitude (Liu et al., 2007; Lii et al., 2015; Moslemipur, 2016; Jamshidi et al., 2018; Liang & Lin, 2018; Parker et al., 2018). Thus, consumers whose attitudes toward sport products are formed via peripheral cues are likely to accept the perceived value of products endorsed by athletes. Perceived value arising between endorsers and products leads to attitude change due to external motives or the influence of contextual factors through the reception and processing of information. Therefore, low-involvement consumers may prioritize peripheral routes in their cognitive processing. Also, according to Petty et al. (1983), involvement can differ between low-involvement and high-involvement individuals but ultimately may result in attitude and purchase behavior change in both groups.

Other results indicated that perceived value of non-sport products affects customers' purchase intention depending on involvement and endorser–product fit. The moderating path coefficients for low involvement ($\beta = 0.667$) and high involvement ($\beta = 0.325$) in the effect of perceived value of non-sport products on customers' purchase intention for sports-celebrity endorsers are greater than the moderating path coefficients for low involvement ($\beta = 0.427$) and high involvement ($\beta = 0.219$) for (general) celebrity endorsers. Therefore, it can be concluded that sports celebrity endorsement of non-

sport products has a greater effect than (general) celebrity endorsement of non-sport products. Furthermore, the results showed that sports celebrity endorsement of non-sport products can increase purchase intention among customers with low involvement compared to those with high involvement. It was also found that fit is not the only influential factor, because sports celebrity endorsement of non-sport products has a greater effect on both low- and high-involvement customers than (general) celebrity endorsement of non-sport products. Finally, sports celebrity endorsement can also change and increase purchase intention among high-involvement customers. These findings align with Lee and Thorson (2018), Thorn (2012), Suryava and Areva (2014), and Esmaeilpour (2017).

To explain these findings, sports celebrities can increase purchase intention for non-sport products. Liang et al (2011) argued that sports endorsers are more attractive and act as stronger cues than general celebrities; their results support the present study. Famous athletes typically exert greater influence on their communities and fans, and people pay more attention to their opinions and recommendations. Because athletes demonstrate strong influence through their sporting activities, their endorsements of sport products—given their higher credibility and influence—may increase customers' purchase intention. On the other hand, celebrity endorsement of non-sport products can also be effective, but in such cases selecting celebrities who are appropriate and aligned with the product type is critically important. Overall, sports celebrity endorsement of both sport and non-sport products—due to their higher community influence and credibility in sports—may be the better option. Nevertheless, choosing appropriate endorsers aligned with the product and marketing objectives is essential.

This study—like other studies—had limitations. Controlled limitations in this study include: (1) geographic scope: the study domain was limited to Iran; (2) because the number of endorsers was four (famous male, famous female, famous sportsman male, famous sportswoman female) and the products were two types (sport and non-sport), information for each was examined and analyzed separately; (3) data collection and analysis were time-consuming due to the four endorsers and two

product types; (4) endorsers were selected by experts through voting; and (5) products were selected by experts through voting. Uncontrolled limitations include: (1) structural constraints, organizational regulations, and the nature of human relationships in brand companies, which may affect the findings; (2) human considerations that may influence respondents' answers to questionnaires; and (3) because all participants in this study were Iranian, the results can only be generalized to Iran.

It is expected that this study contributes to the advancement of knowledge regarding the influence of perceived value of sport and non-sport products on customers' purchase intention by involvement and endorser-product fit in Iran. Based on the explanatory and modeling nature of the study, recommendations are offered in two areas: theoretical and practical. Theoretical recommendations include: (1) overall, given the current findings, this study can strengthen the domestic literature on sports celebrity and general celebrity endorsement of sport and non-sport products. Although a large number of domestic studies have examined other endorsement factors, research on the effect of perceived value of sport and non-sport products on purchase intention by involvement and endorser-product fit has been neglected; this study can therefore take a small step toward filling that research gap. (2) In this study, the roles of endorser gender and involvement were introduced as important variables in endorsement—topics that have not received much attention domestically; this can open a new research avenue on celebrity and sports celebrity endorsement and provide guidance for future studies. (3) Previous studies focused more on endorser-product fit and fit between celebrities and products; nevertheless, research specifically examining the effect of perceived value of sport and non-sport products on purchase intention by involvement and fit had not

been evaluated. This study showed that consumers with different levels of involvement (high vs. low) have different attitudes toward purchase intention.

Practical recommendations include: (1) given the findings, companies are advised to use sports celebrities for endorsement who have strong personality types to increase endorsement effectiveness; (2) companies should select endorsers who enjoy high social acceptance so that people trust and approve of them; (3) companies should focus on star athletes because star athletes inevitably attract attention and engage a larger portion of the population; and (4) in endorser selection, attention should be paid to the endorser's attractiveness across various dimensions—especially among youth, where attractiveness can be an influential factor in product purchase.

Considering that male and female customers' tastes may differ, it is recommended that future research investigate which gender of customers is most influenced by endorsement. Since involvement is affected by various factors and this study only examined endorser gender, it is recommended that future studies also investigate other influencing variables such as age.

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There is no conflict of interest.

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