

UNVEILING THE POLITICAL SYMPHONY OF CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS IN SOUTH ASIA'S TAPESTRY, WITH A SPOTLIGHT ON PAKISTAN'S DYNAMIC VOTING INTENTIONS FOR POLITICAL LEADERS

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ABSTRACT

In the realm of political science and communication studies, the profound influence of celebrity endorsements on politics often goes unrecognized. This study addresses this gap by investigating the intricate dynamics of celebrity endorsements and their effect on the voting preferences of young voters in Pakistan, with a specific focus on both pre-and post-2018 elections. Through a meticulous exploration of mediating factors, we analyze the attitudes and voting inclinations of 501 participants, shedding light on the significant impacts witnessed in the evolving political landscape leading up to the 2024 elections. Our findings not only contribute to the existing political advertising literature but also pave the way for future research initiatives. The study concludes with comprehensive insights, recommendations, and theoretical implications, providing a nuanced understanding of the role of celebrity endorsements in shaping political landscapes during this critical period.

Keywords; Celebrity Endorsement, Political Leaders, Voting Intentions, Celebrity Endorsers.

INTRODUCTION

The paradigm shift in advertising and marketing introduced by Kotler and Levy in 1969 marked a transformative epoch, extending the traditional marketing scope to encompass non-profit organizations. This groundbreaking contribution has significantly altered the landscape of marketing theory and practice, spurred significant recent research, and fostered collaboration among scholars and practitioners (Ugwu 2023, Levy 1969). Within the domain of advertising and marketing, the strategic utilization of celebrity endorsement, a universally employed mechanism, seamlessly extends its impact to political endorsements (Chou 2014). The incorporation of celebrities into political campaigns stems from the rise of modernization politics, sparking innovations in branding and communication strategies for political entities and practitioners (Arkorful 2022). While the pertinence of celebrity endorsements remains conspicuous, a

discernible lacuna persists in the realm of empirical investigations within this domain. Celebrities, wielding formidable influence, have graciously extended their endorsements to various entities, political candidates included, thereby exerting a profound impact on the evaluative processes of discerning voters.

This study investigates the nuanced effects of celebrity endorsements in political campaigns, focusing on voter attitudes, particularly among swing voters. It emphasizes their pivotal role, and the research underscores their profound significance in the intricate political landscape of South Asia, specifically within Pakistan (Saleem 2023). Pakistan's political landscape witnessed a persistent surge in uncertainty, marking an ongoing escalation in the prevailing political volatility (Audi 2022, Sulehri 2020) even after the last elections in 2018 (Nawaz 2021). Within the ambit of this study, the

central focus was to meticulously unravel the transformative dynamics exerted by social media on the intricate organization of political campaigns. Simultaneously, discerning scrutiny was undertaken to dissect the strategic orchestration of celebrity endorsements, with nuanced insights gleaned from pivotal instances, exemplified by Oprah Winfrey's influential support of Barack Obama in the pivotal year of 2008 (Garthwaite 2008). By analyzing these dimensions, the research significantly contributes to understanding the intricate interplay between celebrity endorsements and political dynamics, enriching the comprehension of political communication and strategy as in the fabric of political science and communication studies, the profound impact wielded by celebrity endorsements in politics has regrettably been consistently underestimated (Baroan 2022), especially within the unique context of Pakistan.

1. Literature Review:

The global political communication landscape has undergone a significant shift with the transformative impact of social media (Okoye & Oparaugo, 2019). This study explores the role of social media and celebrity endorsements in political campaigns, drawing insights from Owen's work (Owen, 2014), while Twitter and Facebook are crucial for political marketing (Lilleker, 2015; Rutter, Hanretty, & Lettice, 2018), limited research, exists on this genre of research (Marquart, Brosius, & de Vreese, 2022). The investigation focuses on how emotionally charged political content, coupled with celebrity endorsements, influences young voters on social media. Modern political communication has shifted from candidate-focused to citizen-engagement strategies through social media (Gronbeck, 2009; Oparaugo, 2021), yet research on their impact on political behavior still needs to be done (Brooks & Carnahan, 2020; George, 2017; Street, 2007). These contemporary practices are illustrative of progressing drifts in visual political communication by providing valuable insights into how politicians navigate a media landscape where the influence of still and moving images continues to grow, a theme delved into further in subsequent sections of this study (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019).

Political marketing, akin to enterprises, faces common challenges, with leaders and candidates using similar tools for success (Chowdhury & Naheed, 2020; Lees-Marshment, 2001). The

empirical investigation of the impact of celebrity endorsers on voter behavior is crucial, considering the endorser's reputation (Brown & Basil, 1995; Henneberg & Chen, 2008; Um, 2017). Historical endorsements in American politics influencing voter behavior are explored (Boudreau, 2020; Calvert, 1985; Chou, 2014).

The pioneering example was witnessed in 2008 during the Democratic Presidential primaries, when Oprah Winfrey's endorsement was highlighted for its influence on voter turnout and preferences, with varied impacts among respondents (Carroll & Jones, 2007; Garthwaite & Moore, 2013; Pease & Brewer, 2008). Oprah Winfrey's influence on social media impacted increased voter turnout (Butler & Collins, 1999; Carroll & Jones, 2007; Goldman, 2007; Pease & Brewer, 2008). Political advertising's impact on voter attitudes is explored, acknowledging varying scholarly opinions and mixed effects on preferences (Arens, 2002; Butler & Collins, 1999; Duru, 2021; Franklin, 1994; Kjeldsen & Hess, 2021; Lees-Marshment, 2003). Celebrity endorsements aligning with voter preferences serve as reinforcing elements (Staddon, 2013).

In the West, such political marketing has been witnessed in the recent past, promoting politicians with substantial impact within the bustling public arenas of contemporary democracies (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019). For instance, Justin Trudeau was elected as the Prime Minister of Canada in 2015, much like Trump, evolving trends of visual political communication, a theme delved into further in subsequent sections of this study (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019).

In South Asia, particularly in India, it is common for celebrities, including sports players and film actors, to seamlessly transition into politics (Banerjee & Chaudhuri, 2020). But to be endorsed by Celebrities was done after 2014 (Mitra, 2021) when celebrities exerting substantial pressure expedited within the bustling public arenas of contemporary. Celebrities get more support from politicians when they criticize their opponents on social media. Likewise, endorsing their favorite candidates also boosts online engagement. It highlights the influential role celebrities have in shaping public discussions (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019); in South Asia, the best example is seen in Post-2014, when celebrities frequently engage with Modi on social media without dissent. Bollywood celebrities established Modi as a brand for modis political

drives, enabling subtle celebrity engagement in politics, departing from the traditionally limited participation in election campaigns. This shift marks a new era in Indian political communication, shaping 'Modi as a Brand' (Mitra, 2021; Rai, 2019). Unlike India, Pakistan, the Ex-PM Imran Khan, recognized as a political celebrity, is actively involved in supporting causes like climate change (Saleem, Butt, & Ullah, 2023), Islamism (Shakil & Yilmaz, 2021), and anti-corruption (Faiz, 2022), covid precautions (Zafran, Afzal, Iqbal, Shahzad, & Niaz), national security (Asad, Hanan, Fareha, & Zafar, 2021), made efforts to raise public awareness. Notably, there is a trend wherein entertainment celebrities mobilize public support for him, both during and after his political tenure. However, there needs to be a more systematic analysis of this phenomenon from a theoretical perspective, especially during the period following the 2018 elections and the conclusion of the PTI government's term. This current study aims to address this void, serving as a pioneering effort by delving into existing research conducted within the geopolitical context of Pakistan.

In Pakistan's 2018 elections, Facebook and Twitter played a crucial role during political campaigns was evident, with an estimated 44 million active Facebook users, underscoring its role in shaping public opinion and electoral outcomes (Muzaffar, Yaseen, & Safdar, 2020).

PTI succeeded in the General Elections 2013 by appealing to youth, gaining 35 National Assembly seats compared to 1 in 2002. Despite P.M.L. (N)'s minimal focus on youth, they won. Raises questions about factors influencing youth voting and P.M.L. (N) 's commitment to promises made during youth-centric campaigns (Hussain, Sajid, & Jullandhry, 2018) because voters make decisions after seeing their particular qualities in political leaders, including attributes like honesty, intelligence, friendliness, sincerity, and Trustworthiness being endorsed (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019).

This research is essential, especially in Pakistan, where the common practice of celebrity endorsements for political entities still needs to be tested. It provides essential insights into the transformative impact of social media and celebrity endorsements on political communication, with a particular focus on South Asia. Addressing research gaps, the study illuminates evolving patterns of celebrity engagement, shaping public discourse and electoral dynamics in India and Pakistan.

Additionally, it explores the lasting influence of historical endorsements in American politics, contributing to our understanding of political marketing challenges and strategies employed by leaders. The research's emphasis on the role of celebrities in shaping public opinion, with its focus on youth-centric campaigns, raises questions about factors influencing youth voting for political leaders, as glimpsed in India (Mitra, 2021; Rai, 2019). In essence, this study pioneers a systematic analysis of celebrity endorsements on social media and political marketing, providing incalculable perspicuity for policymakers, political strategists, and scholars steering the complexities of Pakistan's contemporary political landscape.

2. Materials and methods

Research Design: After implementing a conclusive research design with descriptive characteristics to evaluate the factors that influence celebrity endorsement on the intention to vote in the elections, a quantitative approach is selected to test this conceptual framework.

Method & Instrument: Opting for a survey method Esiri and Onwubere (2012) Alant, Dillman, and Don (1994). Pinsonneault and Kraemer (1993) by formulating a 44-item instrument" for data collection purposes self-administrative questionnaire, and the instrument was designed based on the allied literature.

Scales: By analyzing the Prior research, all the variables are operationalized and measured by taking scales from the existing literature. Celebrity Attractiveness (CL) is taken as personal charm, beauty, and elegance, fostering a positive perception with seven items (Ohanian 1990, Patzer 2012). Celebrity Trustworthiness (C.T.) reflects integrity and credibility with six items (Ohanian 1990, McCroskey 1966, Erdogan 1999). Celebrity Endorsement (C.E.) involves perceiving the endorser as a credible source based on attributes like expertise, experience, knowledge, qualifications, and campaigning skills with seven items (Ohanian 1990, Erdogan 1999). Celebrity Familiarity (C.F.), representing knowledge about the source through exposure, is evaluated using a three-item scale (Erdogan 1999, Cuomo 2019). Celebrity Likeability, gauged through appealing behavior, famous appearance, likable voice, outfit, professional Attitude, and overall appeal, signifies audience

affection for the source with seven items (McKelvey 1985, Ha 2017, Tripp 1994). Attitude toward celebrity endorsement (A.T.C.E.) reflects positive or negative feelings about a celebrity’s product endorsement and is assessed through a seven-item scale (Cuomo 2019, Williams 1989, Bergkvist 2016). Intention to vote (I.V.T) (Austin 2008), representing voter actions shaped by motives, beliefs, and attitudes, is measured through a scale assessing the influence of celebrity endorsements on political party support, trust in social networks, celebrity impact on young voters, and voting likelihood following a celebrity endorsement by opting seven-item scale (Chou 2014, Ben-Ur 2002). An endorser (E) is operationalized through a three-item scale emphasizing the endorser’s role as a positive role model and exemplar of desirable work

ethics and behavior (McCutcheon 2002, Rich 1997). And celebrity attractiveness (C.A.), is operationalized as attitudes toward celebrity endorsements and voting behavior with a five-item scale (Madinga 2021, Tantawi 2019).

Sampling: Young adults aged between 18 and 29 (Saud 2020, 2023), involvement in electoral activities has become evident, and there is minimal skepticism that these individuals will assume a progressively more dynamic role in the political sphere in times to come selected as the population that is well-versed in digital terminologies (Austin 2008). Out of the 550 respondents approached, 501 participated in the survey, with 30 percent being female and 70 percent male among the filled-up questionnaires.

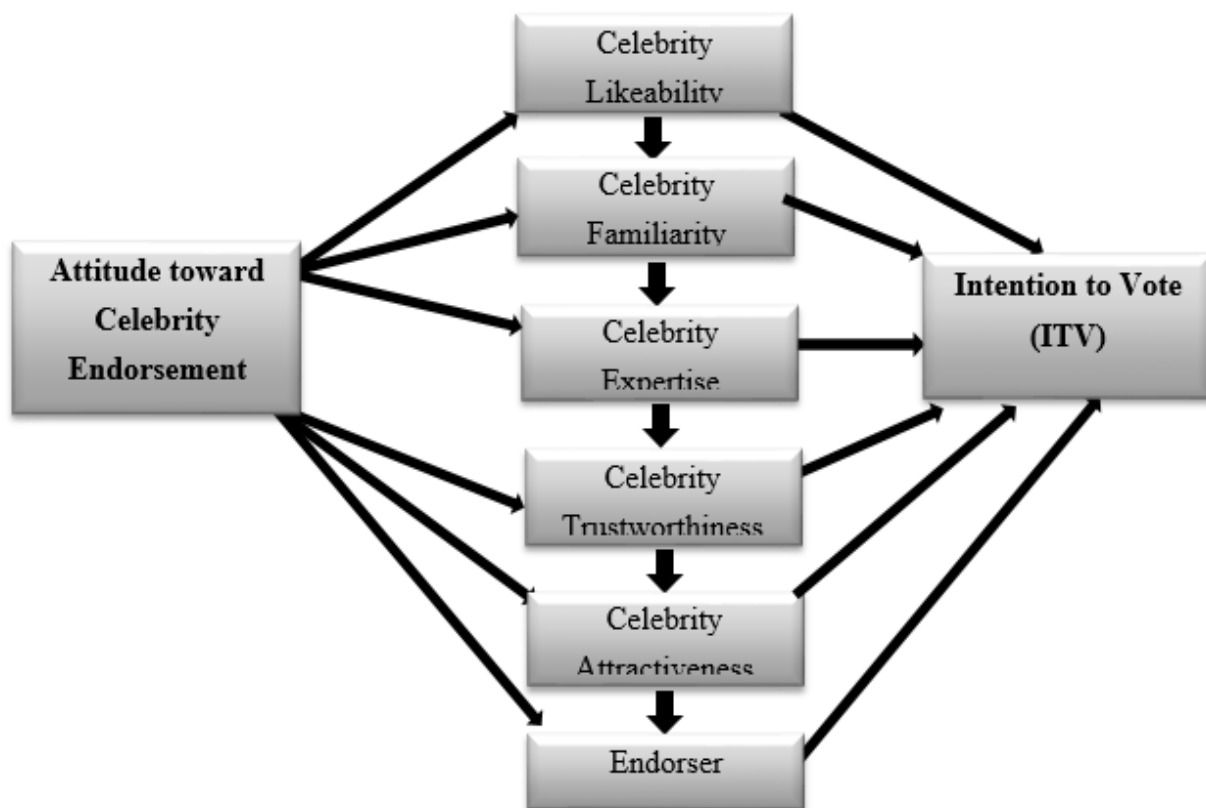


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Model

3. Results

Descriptive Findings & Results: A Pearson correlation test was applied to test the proposed hypothesis and was conducted to explore the assumptions of multiple regression. The sample size was adequate. Likewise, the data was screened for outliers and identified outliers were removed. The multi-collinearity assumption is also met because all the variables are associated. However, none of the correlation coefficients exceed .7 (Pallant 2020). Extensive literature guided for non-probability (Malhotra 2010) and convenience sampling approach (Chaffee 1997) shows there is a significant correlation between youth experiences and popular culture (Turner 2004); likewise, it is noted that social media incited and precast the youth interest in politics (Ida 2020). The sample size for this study is 501 respondents, which was collected from March-June 2023. The final study employed refined scales with improved internal consistency.

To evaluate the questionnaire's reliability and validity with 501 respondents, making revisions to improve the scales. Cronbach's alpha values below the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Pallant 2020) prompted item removal in several scales, resulting in enhanced reliability. The Cronbach's Alpha score was -.969 to determine the reliability of the 5-item Celebrity Attractiveness scale. However, the reliability increased to -.092 by removing item # 5. The researcher's reliability increased to .545 when item # 4 was eliminated. When item # 1 was removed, the reliability was .404. Then, the researcher reported an inter-item correlation value of .266 (max .266; min .266), and the researcher utilized a 2-item scale to measure celebrity attractiveness for the final study. Cronbach's alpha values (e.g., .5) are commonly found with brief scales (e.g., scales having fewer than ten items). In this context, employing the mean inter-item correlation for both items could be deemed equitable. As suggested by Briggs and Cheek (1986), the suitable spectrum for inter-item correlation falls within the interval of .2 to .4.

The Cronbach's Alpha value of 6-item Celebrity Trustworthiness was -.172, below the criterion. Therefore, item #6 was eliminated by the researcher, improving the scale's reliability to -.337. The scale's reliability was increased to .141 by deleting item #5. The researcher further improved the scale's reliability .562 by deleting item #4. The researcher's

reliability increased to .774 by removing item # 3, an acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficient value. The researcher then used the 2-item celebrity trustworthiness scale to gather information for the final study.

The Celebrity expertise scale's Cronbach's Alpha value, below the benchmark, was 0.14. As a result, the researcher chose to eliminate item #5, leading to a notable improvement in the reliability of the scale to a coefficient of .226. Similarly, upon the exclusion of item #4, the scale's reliability exhibited a substantial increase to .538. Then, the researcher removed item # 3; the Cronbach's alpha value was .733. The researcher then utilized the 2-item celebrity expertise scale to collect data for the final study.

The computed Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the 3-item Celebrity Familiarity measure yielded a value of .536. Subsequently, through the elimination of item #3, the reliability of the scale exhibited a notable enhancement, achieving a heightened value of .713, above the benchmark. Hence, the researcher used a 2-item scale for the final study.

The assessment of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the 7-item Celebrity Likeability construct resulted in a recorded value of .293. However, a discernible improvement in the reliability of the scale, indicated by an elevated value of .576, was observed subsequent to the exclusion of item #1. The researcher removed item # 2, and Cronbach's alpha value improved to .718, which is acceptable. The researcher then collected the information for the final study using the 5-item celebrity likeability scale.

The 7-item Attitude towards celebrity endorsement Cronbach's Alpha value was .542, below the benchmark. Therefore, item # 1 was eliminated by the researcher, and the scale's internal consistency demonstrated an augmentation, with its reliability ascending to a value of .662. However, when the researcher removed item # 2, the scale subsequently exhibited an advancement in its reliability, elevating the coefficient to .735, above the benchmark. The researcher then utilized the 5-item Attitude Towards Celebrity Endorsement scale to procure data for the ultimate investigation.

The 7-item Intention to Vote scale's Cronbach alpha value was .522. Therefore, the researcher removed item # 1; the reliability increased to .666. Furthermore, the researcher deleted item # 2. As a result, the scale's reliability increased to .752, above the suggested benchmark. The researcher used this 5-

item intention-to-vote scale for the final study to measure the respondents' intention to vote. The 3-item Endorser scale's Cronbach's alpha value was .549. Then, the researcher removed item # 3 to

improve the scale's reliability .711. The researcher used a 2-item endorser scale for the final research.

Table 1: Statistical Hypothesis Evaluation

Attitude toward celebrity endorsement	Intention to vote	Celebrity attractiveness	Celebrity trustworthiness	Celebrity expertise	Celebrity familiarity	Celebrity likeability	Endorser
1	.457 ^{***^}	.118 ^{***^}	.083	-.053	.034	.404 ^{***^}	-.115 ^{***^}
	.000	.008	.064	.240	.442	.000	.010
500	496	500	500	498	499	499	500
.457 ^{***^}	1	.104 ^{**^}	.117 ^{***^}	-.031	-.002	.405 ^{***^}	-.054
.000		.020	.009	.489	.962	.000	.227
496	497	497	497	495	496	496	497
.118 ^{***^}	.104 ^{**^}	1	-.300 ^{***^}	.176 ^{***^}	.084	.095 ^{**^}	.043
.008	.020		.000	.000	.061	.034	.336
500	497	501	501	499	500	500	501
.083	.117 ^{***^}	-.300 ^{***^}	1	-.188 ^{***^}	.035	.050	-.013
.064	.009	.000		.000	.440	.261	.769
500	497	501	501	499	500	500	501
-.053	-.031	.176 ^{***^}	-.188 ^{***^}	1	-.084	.049	.038
.240	.489	.000	.000		.061	.276	.398
498	495	499	499	499	498	498	499
.034	-.002	.084	.035	-.084	1	.132 ^{***^}	.079
.442	.962	.061	.440	.061		.003	.076
499	496	500	500	498	500	499	500
.404 ^{***^}	.405 ^{***^}	.095 ^{**^}	.050	.049	.132 ^{***^}	1	-.092 ^{**^}
.000	.000	.034	.261	.276	.003		.040
499	496	500	500	498	499	500	500
-.115 ^{***^}	-.054	.043	-.013	.038	.079	-.092 ^{**^}	1
.010	.227	.336	.769	.398	.076	.040	
500	497	501	501	499	500	500	501

Pearson correlation was conducted to explore the assumptions of multiple regression. The sample size was adequate. Likewise, the data was screened for outliers and identified outliers were removed. The multi-collinearity assumption is also met because all

the variables are associated. However, none of the correlation coefficients exceed .7 [31].

H1: To what extent does celebrity likeability (CL) mediate the relationship between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement (A.T.C.E.) and intention to vote (ITV)?

Table 2: Regression Analysis for Mediation of celebrity likeability between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement and intention to vote.

Variables	B	S.E.B.	95% CL	β	R ²	R ²
Step 1					.21	.21***
Constant	7.62***	.653	(6.340,8.91)			
ATCE	.46***	.040	(.388, .548)	.46***		
Step 2					.27	.06***
Constant	.107***	.749	(3.63, 6.57)			
ATCE	.36***	.043	(.278, .445)	.36***		
Celebrity likeability	.27***	.045	(.189, .364)	.26***		

CL= confidence interval; ATCE= attitude toward celebrity endorsement; ***p <.001

Table 2 shows the impact of Attitude toward celebrity endorsement and celebrity likeability on the voting intentions of respondents. During the initial stage (Step 1), the coefficient of determination (R²) was computed as .21, indicating that the Attitude toward celebrity endorsement explained a 21% variance in the respondents' intention to vote with F (1, 493) = 133.63, p < .001. The findings explained that Attitude toward celebrity endorsement positively predicted intention to vote ($\beta = .46, p < .001$). During the subsequent phase (Step 2), the coefficient of determination (R²) attained a value of .27, denoting that the extent of celebrity likeability accounted for 27% of the variability in respondents' voting intentions. This relationship was substantiated by an analysis of variance with an F statistic of 91.13 for degrees of freedom (2, 492) and a significance level (p) less than .001. The findings illustrated that Attitude toward celebrity endorsement ($\beta = .36, p < .001$) and celebrity likeability positively predicted intention to vote ($\beta = .26, p < .001$). The change in

the coefficient of determination (ΔR^2) amounting to .06 elucidated a 6% alteration in the variance between model 1 and model 2, accompanied by a corresponding change in the F statistic (ΔF) of 38.47 for degrees of freedom (1, 492), signifying statistical significance at a level of p < .001. The regression coefficients pertaining to the construct of Attitude towards celebrity endorsement exhibited a subsequent reduction as they transitioned from Model 1 to Model 2 (from .46 to .36). Despite this reduction, their significance persisted, thus affirming the presence of partial mediation. Put differently, Attitude toward celebrity endorsement, directly and indirectly, affects respondents' intention to vote. Therefore, our H1 is supported and explains that the variable of celebrity likeability partially mediates the relationship between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement and intention to vote.

H2: *Celebrity familiarity (C.F.) mediates the relationship between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement (A.T.C.E.) and intention to vote (ITV).*

Table 3: Regression Analysis for Mediation of Celebrity familiarity between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement and intention to vote.

Variables	B	S.E.B.	95% CL	β	R ²	R ²
Step 1					.21	.21***
Constant	7.72***	.655	(6.42,8.99)			
ATCE	.46***	.041	(.388, .542)	.45***		
Step 2					.000	.000
Constant	7.914***	.826	(6.292,9.53)			
ATCE	.46***	.041	(.383, .542)	.45***		
Celebrity familiarity	-.032	.077	(-.183, .120)	-.016		

CL= confidence interval; ATCE= attitude toward celebrity endorsement; ***p <.001

Table 3 presents the influence of Attitude toward celebrity endorsement and celebrity familiarity on the intention to vote among respondents. During the initial stage (Step 1), the coefficient of determination (R²) with a value of .21 unveiled that the Attitude toward celebrity endorsement explained a 21% variance in the respondents' intention to vote with F (1, 493) = 129.59, p < .001. The findings explained that Attitude toward celebrity endorsement positively predicted intention to vote ($\beta = .45$, p < .001). In the subsequent stage (Step 2), the coefficient of determination (R²) at .21 elucidated that the construct of Celebrity Familiarity accounted for no significant variance in the respondents' intention to vote. This finding was supported by an analysis of variance with an F statistic of 64.77 for degrees of freedom (2, 492) and a significance level (p) lower than .001. The findings illustrated that Attitude toward celebrity endorsement ($\beta = .46$, p < .001) and celebrity familiarity did not predict intention to vote ($\beta = -.016$, p = .681). The adjustment

in the coefficient of determination (ΔR^2) at .000 indicated an absence of variance alteration, amounting to 0%, between Model 1 and Model 2. It was corroborated by a slight modification in the F statistic (ΔF) recorded as .169, involving degrees of freedom (1, 492) and a corresponding p-value of .68. The regression weights for Attitude toward celebrity endorsement, sequentially, there was a reduction in magnitude as the regression coefficient transitioned from Model 1 to Model 2 (from .45 to .46). Yet, it retained its substantial significance and maintained near equivalence. In simpler words, Attitude toward celebrity endorsement only directly affects respondents' intention to vote. Therefore, our H2 is not supported, which explains that celebrity familiarity does not mediate the association linking Attitude towards celebrity endorsement and intention to vote.

H3: *Celebrity expertise (C.E.) mediates the relationship between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement (A.T.C.E.) and intention to vote (ITV).*

Table 4: Regression Analysis examining the mediating role of celebrity expertise in the relationship between Attitude towards celebrity endorsement and intention to vote.

Variables	B	S.E.B.	95% CL	β	R ²	R ²
Step 1					.21	.21***
Constant	7.66***	.659	(6.374, 8.965)			
ATCE	.45***	.041	(.384, .544)	.45***		
Step 2					.27	.06***
Constant	7.77***	.845	(6.11, 9.43)			
ATCE	.45***	.041	(.383, .544)	.45***		
Celebrity expertise	-.01	.077	(-.166, .136)	-.01		

CL= confidence interval; ATCE= attitude toward celebrity endorsement; ***p <.001

Table 4 presents the influence of individuals' Attitudes towards celebrity endorsement and celebrity expertise on intention to vote among respondents. In the initial stage (Step 1), the coefficient of determination (R²) with a value of .20 indicated that the Attitude toward celebrity endorsement explained a 20% variance in the respondents' intention to vote with F (1, 492) = 129.36, p < .001. The findings explained that Attitude toward celebrity endorsement positively predicted intention to vote ($\beta = .46$, p < .001). In the subsequent phase (Step 2), the coefficient of determination (R²) at .20 elucidated that the construct of celebrity expertise accounted for no substantial variance in respondents' intention to vote.

This observation was substantiated by an analysis of variance, presenting an F statistic of 64.57 for degrees of freedom (2, 491) and a significance level (p) below .001. The findings illustrated that Attitude toward celebrity endorsement ($\beta = .45$, p < .001) celebrity likeability positively predicted intention to vote. However, Celebrity expertise did not predict intention to vote ($\beta = -.008$, p = .86). The change in the coefficient of determination (ΔR^2) at .000 denoted a minimal 0% alteration in the variance between model 1 and model 2 in conjunction with a corresponding change in the ΔF value (1,491) = .038, p = .84. The regression weights for Attitude toward celebrity endorsement on both models, i.e., transitioning from Model 1 to Model 2 (from .45 to

.45), the significance of the relationship persisted. And identical. More specifically, Attitude toward celebrity endorsement has only direct and indirect effects on respondents' intention to vote. Therefore, our H3 is not supported, which means that celebrity expertise does not mediate the association between

individuals' Attitudes toward celebrity endorsement and their intention to vote.

H4: *Celebrity Trustworthiness (C.T.) mediates the relationship between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement (A.T.C.E.) and intention to vote (ITV).*

Table 5: Regression analysis investigating the mediating role of celebrity trustworthiness in the context of Attitude toward celebrity endorsement and intention to vote.

Variables	B	S.E.B.	95% CL	β	R ²	R ²
Step 1					.20	.20***
Constant	7.67***	.655	(6.39,8.96)			
ATCE	.46***	.041	(.384, .543)	.46***		
Step 2					.21	.006*
Constant	6.90***	.755	(5.417, 8.38)			
ATCE	.45***	.041	(.377, .537)	.45***		
Celebrity Trustworthiness	.15***	.073	(.006, .295)	.26*		

CL= confidence interval; ATCE= attitude toward celebrity endorsement; $p < .001$; $p < .05$.

Table 5 shows the impact of Attitude toward celebrity endorsement and celebrity Trustworthiness on the intention to vote among respondents. During the initial phase (Step 1), the coefficient of determination (R²) with a value of .20 unveiled that the Attitude toward celebrity endorsement explained a 20% variance in the respondents' intention to vote with $F(1, 494) = 130.55, p < .001$. The findings explained that Attitude toward celebrity endorsement positively predicted intention to vote ($\beta = .46, p < .001$). During the subsequent phase (Step 2), the coefficient of determination (R²) at .21 elucidated that the construct of celebrity trustworthiness accounted for a variance of 21% in the respondents' intention to vote. This observation was corroborated by an analysis of variance with an F statistic (2, 493) = 67.80, $p < .001$. The findings illustrated that Attitude toward celebrity endorsement ($\beta = .45, p < .001$) and celebrity Trustworthiness positively predicted intention to vote ($\beta = .08, p = .04$). The ΔR^2

value of .007 explained only a marginal variance alteration of 0.7% between model 1 and model 2, evidenced by a change in the ΔF value of 4.19 for degrees of freedom (1, 493) and a p-value of .04. The regression coefficients associated with Attitude toward celebrity endorsement underwent a subsequent reduction from Model 1 to Model 2 (from .46 to .45) while retaining their statistical significance, thereby affirming the presence of partial mediation. In simpler words, Attitude toward celebrity endorsement has primary and mediated impacts. Respondents' intention to vote. Therefore, our H4 is supported, which explains that celebrity Trustworthiness partially acts as a mediating factor in the association between individuals' Attitudes towards celebrity endorsement and their intention to vote.

H5: *Celebrity attractiveness (C.A.) mediates the relationship between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement (A.T.C.E.) and intention to vote (ITV).*

Table 6: Regression Analysis for Mediation of Celebrity attractiveness between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement and intention to vote.

Variables	B	S.E.B.	95% CL	β	R ²	R ²
Step 1					.207	.207***
Constant	7.67***	.655	(6.39,8.96)			
ATCE	.46***	.041	(.384,.543)	.46***		
Step 2					.209	.002
Constant	6.79***	.936	(4.95, 8.63)			
ATCE	.46***	.041	(.377, .537)	.36***		
Celebrity attractiveness	.16	.123	(-.079, .405)	.053		

CL= confidence interval; ATCE= attitude toward celebrity endorsement; ***p <.001

Table 6 presents the influence of individuals' Attitudes toward celebrity endorsement and their perceived attractiveness on the intention to vote among respondents. During the initial step (Step 1), the coefficient of determination (R²) with a value of .207 indicated that the Attitude toward celebrity endorsement explained a 21% variance in the respondents' intention to vote with F (1, 494) = 130.55, p < .001. The findings explained that Attitude toward celebrity endorsement positively predicted intention to vote ($\beta = .46$, p < .001). In the subsequent phase (Step 2), the coefficient of determination (R²) at .209 elucidated that they also explained a .9% variance in the respondents' intention to vote with F (1, 493) = 66.24, p < .001. The findings illustrated that Attitude toward celebrity endorsement ($\beta = .45$, p < .001) and celebrity attractiveness positively predicted intention to vote ($\beta = .053$, p=.18). The modification in coefficient of

determination (ΔR^2) at .002 accounted for a variance shift of 0.2% between model 1 and model 2, accompanied by a corresponding change in the ΔF value of 1.74 for degrees of freedom (1, 493) and a p-value of .18. The regression coefficients concerning Attitude toward celebrity endorsement underwent a subsequent decrease from Model 1 to Model 2 (from .46 to .45). Yet, they retained their statistical significance, confirming the presence of partial mediation. In simpler words, Attitude toward celebrity endorsement has immediate and mediated influences on respondents' intention to vote. Therefore, our H5 is supported and explains that celebrity attractiveness partially serves as a mediator in the association between individuals' Attitudes towards celebrity endorsement and their intention to vote.

H6: Endorser (E) mediates the relationship between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement (A.T.C.E.) and intention to vote (ITV).

Table 7: A regression analysis investigates the potential mediating role of the endorser in the relationship between individuals' attitudes towards celebrity endorsement and their intention to vote.

Variables	B	S.E.B.	95% CL	B	R ²	• R ^{*2}
Step 1					.21	.21***
Constant	7.67***	.655	(6.39,8.96)			
ATCE	.46***	.041	(.384, .543)	.46***		
Step 2					.21	.000
Constant	7.72***	.938	(5.88, 9.56)			
ATCE	.46***	.041	(.383,.543)	.36***		
Celebrity attractiveness	-.006	.084	(-.172, .160)	.26***		

CL= confidence interval; ATCE= attitude toward celebrity endorsement; ***p <.001

Table 7 presents the analysis of the effects of individuals' attitudes toward celebrity endorsements and their perceptions of the endorsers on the

likelihood of intending to vote within the surveyed population. During the initial stage (Step 1) of the analysis, the coefficient of determination (R²) with a

value of 0.21 indicated that the Attitude toward celebrity endorsement explained a 21% variance in the respondents' intention to vote with $F(1, 494) = 130.55, p < .001$. The findings explained that Attitude toward celebrity endorsement positively predicted intention to vote ($\beta = .46, p < .001$). In the second phase (Step 2) of analysis, the coefficient of determination (R^2) at 0.21 indicated that the variations in respondents' intention to vote, to the extent of 21% of the variance, could be elucidated by the influence of the endorser. This statistical relationship was supported by an F statistic of 65.14, with degrees of freedom (2, 493) and a significance level (p) less than 0.001. The findings illustrated that Attitude toward celebrity endorsement ($\beta = .46, p < .001$) and endorser positively predicted intention to

vote ($\beta = -.003, p = .16$). The change in the coefficient of determination (ΔR^2) of 0.000 demonstrated a negligible effect on the variance alteration between Model 1 and Model 2. The change in the F statistic (ΔF) of (1, 493) = 0.005, with a corresponding p-value of 0.94, indicated a lack of significant difference. The regression coefficients for Attitude toward celebrity endorsement remained consistent across Model 1 and Model 2, with values of 0.46, and continued to exhibit statistical significance. Put differently, Attitude toward celebrity endorsement only directly affects respondents' intention to vote. Therefore, our H6 is not supported, which explains that endorsers did not serve as mediators in the association between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement and the intention to vote.

Table 8: Summary of hypotheses testing

S. No	Hypotheses	Nature of Hypotheses	**Accepted*
1	To what extent does celebrity likeability (CL) mediate the relationship between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement (A.T.C.E.) and intention to vote (ITV)?	Mediating	Accepted
2	Celebrity familiarity (C.F.) mediates the relationship between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement (A.T.C.E.) and intention to vote (ITV).	Mediating	Rejected
3	Celebrity expertise (C.E.) mediates the relationship between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement (A.T.C.E.) and intention to vote (ITV).	Mediating	Rejected
4	Celebrity trustworthiness (C.T.) mediates the relationship between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement (A.T.C.E.) and intention to vote (ITV).	Mediating	Accepted
5	Celebrity attractiveness (C.A.) mediates the relationship between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement (A.T.C.E.) and intention to vote (ITV).	Mediating	Accepted
6	Endorser (E) mediates the relationship between Attitude toward celebrity endorsement (A.T.C.E.) and intention to vote (ITV).	Mediating	Rejected

4. Discussion

In its preliminary findings, this study strongly validates the notion that in Pakistan, celebrity endorsements harmonizing with voter preferences serve as potent reinforcing elements, aligning seamlessly with the established body of research in this domain (Staddon 2013). Likewise, it unequivocally documents that social media plays a climacteric role in sculpting public opinion, exerting a profound influence on both the sentiments of the public and the outcomes of elections (Muzaffar 2020). The investigation also reveals that similar to Western countries, the political marketing patterns in

the South Asian tapestry resemble those observed in the Western context in the past (Carroll 2007, Kjeldsen 2021). In disparity to the Western world, Pakistan struggles with unwavering political uncertainty and volatility (Audi (2022), which leads to the requirement to strengthen the political framework, especially in the domain of marketing, a need supported by previous research findings (Duru 2021, Kjeldsen 2021). In the South Asian context, prominently observed in India, the backing of entertainment and sports celebrities serves to bolster the strength and credibility of politicians, as exemplified by the case of Indian Prime Minister

Modi. This observed phenomenon resonates with the findings of the current research (Lalancette 2019, Banerjee 2020, Mitra 2021).

Additionally, considering the fact that former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan was initially recognized as a sports celebrity and his endorsements were taken seriously for collective nation-building efforts aligns with the previous studies (Saleem 2023, Faiz 2022, Zafran 2021, Asad 2021)

Notably, these leaders made efforts to raise public awareness. The role of social media in building public opinion and shaping electoral outcomes is emphasized in previous findings (Muzaffar 2018).

The conceptual framework provides a lens through which these complex interactions bring into line with scholars (Brehm 1966, Miron 2006, Brehm 1993), and Reinforcement theory (Skinner 1937, Gordan 2014), provided a nuanced lens through which to examine the cognitive processes underlying political decision-making, contributing to the theoretical understanding of the phenomenon. The theoretical framework aligns with multiple findings concerning the mediating variables within the theoretical model, accentuating the significance of attributes such as celebrity likability and attractiveness (Garthwaite 2008, Patzer 2012, Kahle 1985, Ohanian 1990) and Trustworthiness (Lalancette 2019, Miller 1969) in influencing voter intentions (Austin 2008). The statistically significant indirect impact of these attributes on voting intention, mediated through attitudes toward celebrity endorsements, aligns with and extends existing research (Um 2017). Particularly noteworthy is the corroborative evidence supporting the positive impact of high levels of celebrity endorsements on voter attitudes, as emphasized by previous scholars (Madinga 2021, Austin 2008, Morin 2012). Contrary to some prior research (Tantawi 2019), the research challenges the perceived importance of celebrity expertise as a mediator in the link between attitudes towards celebrity endorsements and voting intentions. The non-significant role of celebrity expertise and familiarity suggests a need for a reassessment of endorsement strategies, emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing voter attitudes. Furthermore, this notion brings attention to the non-negligible influence of a more robust identification with a celebrity endorser and the popularity of celebrities in political campaigns. These factors positively impact voter

attitudes toward celebrity endorsements, aligning with the works (Gartwaite 2008, Madinga 2021).

In the specific context of Pakistani politics, it offers empirical evidence supporting the contention that attributes like a celebrity's likability, attractiveness, and Trustworthiness play a pivotal role in shaping voter intentions. These findings contribute to the evolving understanding of political behavior within the unique sociocultural and political landscape of Pakistan, as mentioned in the literature (Nawaz 2021). The implications of the current findings for political actors and strategists are noteworthy. *Firstly*, the study advocates for a reconsideration of the weight placed on celebrity expertise in endorsement strategies. While Trustworthiness, likability, and attractiveness have been established as significant influencers, the role of expertise appears less prominent in shaping voter attitudes and intentions. *Secondly*, this study underscores the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements in political advertising, suggesting that innovative integration of celebrities in campaigns can yield favorable outcomes. Political actors are encouraged to capitalize on the identified attributes—likability, attractiveness, and Trustworthiness—when selecting celebrity endorsers. Lastly, the study emphasizes the need for alignment between celebrity values and those of the candidate. The positive influence of a more robust identification with a celebrity endorser implies that political campaigns should strategically align themselves with celebrities whose values resonate with the target voter demographic.

In conclusion, this research contributes to both theoretical and practical understandings of celebrity endorsements in political contexts. By uncovering the nuanced interplay of various attributes and their impact on voter intentions, the study equips political actors in Pakistan with valuable insights for informed decision-making. As the political landscape continues to evolve, the findings presented herein offer a foundation for refining political advertising strategies and navigating the complex dynamics of celebrity endorsements in the pursuit of electoral success. Additionally, the research highlights the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements in political advertising (Morin 2012), endorsing their innovative integration while emphasizing alignment with candidate values.

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Data availability statement

If there is a data set associated with the paper, please provide information about where the data supporting the results or analyses presented in the paper can be found. Where applicable, this should include the hyperlink, DOI or other persistent identifier associated with the data set(s). Templates are also available to support authors.

Data deposition

If you choose to share or make the data underlying the study open, please deposit your data in a recognized data repository prior to or at the time of submission. You will be asked to provide the DOI, pre-reserved DOI, or other persistent identifier for the data set.

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