The Influence of Perceived Celebrity Endorser Credibility in Advertising on Purchase Intention of Thai Consumers

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Abstract

Thai advertisers have used the celebrity strategies widely to promote products while the number of studies on celebrity credibility is still limited. The aim of this research is to develop the comprehensive celebrity credibility measurement model for aiding celebrity selection in Thailand.

This model was tested using the structural equation modeling approach. The sample consisted of 420 Thai consumers living in Bangkok Metropolitan area. Furthermore, in order to bridge the methodological gap regarding the celebrity and product match-up in the previous studies (Till & Busler, 1998, 2000), the present research allowed the respondents to self-select the celebrity and product in order to better reflect the true perceptions of Thai consumers.

The results showed the modified celebrity credibility measurement model was validated with Thai consumers. However, only perceived attractiveness and perceived expertise were significantly related to the purchase intention. The revised model, therefore, provides advertisers and marketers with practical guidelines to select an appropriate celebrity endorser in order to enhance the effectiveness of advertising and

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the resulting campaigns.

บทคัดย่อ

ในสังคมไทย
นักโฆษณามักนำผู้ที่มีชื่อเสียงมาใช้ในกลยุทธ์การสื่อสารทางการตลาดเพื่อสื่อสารเกี่ยวตัวสินค้
าอยู่อย่างกว้างขวาง
ในขณะที่งานวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องกับความน่าเชื่อถือของบุคคลที่มีชื่อเสียงนั้นยังคงมีจำนวนจำกัด
งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์ในการพัฒนาแบบจำลองการวัดความน่าเชื่อถือของบุคคลที่มีชื่อเ
สียง
เพื่อช่วยในการคัดเลือกบุคคลที่มีชื่อเสียงมาใช้ในกลยุทธ์การสื่อสารทางการตลาดในประเทศไท
ย

แบบจำลองการวัดความน่าเชื่อถือของบุคคลที่มีชื่อเสียงนี้วิเคราะห์ด้วยวิธีการสร้างโมเดลสมกา
รโครงสร้าง   (Structural   Equation   Modeling)โดยมีกลุ่มตัวอย่าง
เป็นประชาชนที่อาศัยอยู่ในกรุงเทพ   จำนวน   420   คน
นอกจากนี้งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ยังเปิดโอกาสให้ผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามได้เลือกบุคคลที่มีชื่อเสียงและตัวสิ
นค้าด้วยตนเอง   เพื่อเป็นการสะท้อนการรับรู้ที่แท้จริงของผู้บริโภคชาวไทย
โดยวิธีนี้จะช่วยลดช่องว่างในวิธีการวิจัยเกี่ยวความสอดคล้องกันของบุคคลที่มีชื่อเสียงและตัวสิ
นค้า ที่เกิดขึ้นในงานวิจัยในอดีต (Till and Busler, 1998, 2000)

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า
แบบจำลองการวัดความน่าเชื่อถือของบุคคลที่มีชื่อเสียงที่ได้รับการพัฒนานั้น
มีความเที่ยงตรงเหมาะที่จะใช้กับกลุ่มผู้บริโภคชาวไทย   อย่างไรก็ตาม

มีเพียงปัจจัยด้านความดึงดูดของบุคคลที่มีชื่อเสียงและความเชี่ยวชาญของบุคคลที่มีชื่อเสียงเท่า

นั้น   ที่มีความเกี่ยวข้องอย่างมีนัยสำคัญกับความตั้งใจที่จะซื้อสินค้า

ดังนั้นแบบจำลองการวัดความน่าเชื่อถือของบุคคลที่มีชื่อเสียงที่ได้รับการปรับแล้วนี้

นำเสนอแนวทางปฏิบัติในการเลือกบุคคลที่มีชื่อเสียงที่เหมาะสมให้กับการนำเสนอสินค้าแก่นักโ

ฆษณาและนักการตลาดเพื่อยกระดับความมีประสิทธิภาพของการโฆษณาและผลลัพธ์ที่ได้จาก

การรณรงค์

คำสำคัญ การโฆษณา ความน่าเชื่อถือของบุคคลที่มีชื่อเสียง ความตั้งใจในการซื้อสินค้า

Introduction

Empirical evidence has shown that that celebrities produce many different positive effects for the advertisers and the audiences such as economic return, (Mishra, 2014) product differentiation (Premeaux, 2009), and brand value (Opeyemi & Olatunji, 2013). Many earlier scholars have attempted to create models for measuring the celebrity effectiveness. For instance, Q –ratings are considered good way for companies to avoid hiring big celebrities that are not popular among their target audience (Rossiter & Percy, 1987). The 'Q score' rating technique measures the celebrity endorser by using only two indicators namely the familiarity and the popularity (Patra & Datta, 2010). However, that measurement was argued to be too simple to capture the effect of the celebrity endorser from the wide target (Knott & James, 2004). Specifically, the Q-rating of a celebrity is measured based on the number the audiences who know the particular celebrity only but not from the overall audiences (Erdogan 1999).

Ohanian (1990, 1991) had developed a more reliable scale (reliability

coefficient of 0.82 or higher) and a valid scale for measuring the celebrity's credibility. It was indicated that Ohanian's scale continues to be a valuable tool for measuring celebrity credibility in advertising (Pornpitakpan, 2003; Wheeler, 2009).

In Thailand, most companies have invested a huge amount of money on celebrities to be used in their advertising campaigns. The term 'Celebrity Addicted Era' is coined to reflect the celebrity phenomenon in Thailand (Pond, 2014). Popular celebrities in Thailand such as Nadetch Kugimiya, Urassaya Sperbund, Pachrapa Chaichue have been paid substantial amounts of money for endorsing many brands such as Lay's, True Move, Mazda, etc. (Daradaily, 2014). For instance, True Move also signed a yearly contract with Nadech Kugimiya, the popular star, to endorse their brand with a 7 million baht per year payment (Prachachatonline, 2013).

Although celebrity endorsement strategies have gained popularity in Thailand (Pornpitakpan, 2003), few studies have been conducted to guide academicians and advertisers (Bhatt, Jayswal & Patel, 2013; Ferle & Choi 2005). Therefore, this research aims to develop a comprehensive measurement model for aiding the celebrity endorser selection for Thai consumers. In addition, the research will investigate the impact of the celebrity credibility dimensions on Thai consumers' purchase intentions.

Theoretical Framework

Source Credibility Model

Source (celebrity) credibility is the key factor in choosing celebrities (Garud 2013; Knott & James, 2004). The source credibility model was originated by Hovland (1953) and his associates. They studied the factors influencing the effectiveness of the

communicator resulting in two factors: expertise and trustworthiness (Simmers, Martinez & Haytko, 2009). Hovland (1953) defined expertise as "the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions," (Ohanian, 1990: 41; 1991: 46) and trustworthiness as "the degree of confidence in the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid" (Ohanian, 1990: 41; 1991:47).

Source Attractiveness Model

Apart from source credibility, previous research suggests the significance of the attractiveness dimension of the celebrity endorser (Magnini, Garcia & Honeycutt, 2010; Mcquire, 1985; Simmers et al., 2009; Toncar, Reid & Anderson, 2007). Ohanian (1990) included the dimension of attractiveness for the source credibility model due to its importance to the celebrity for endorsing the product. The source attractiveness model had its origin in the Mcquire (1985) "source valance" model. In addition, the attractiveness of the celebrity can impact the behavioral responses from consumers (Ferle & Choi, 2005) and the purchase intention (Magnini et al., 2010).

The Match-up Hypothesis

In early research, a match-up hypothesis focuses on the appropriate match between the celebrity endorser and a product/brand based on physical attractiveness (Kamins, 1990; Till & Busler 1998, 2000). An attractive celebrity is more effective for an attractive related product (Kamins, 1990). In contrast to the previous study, Till and Busler (1998, 2000) found that the expertise dimension of a celebrity is a stronger match-up effect than attractiveness.

However, difficulties in detecting the match-up effect based on the physical attractiveness have arisen from the methodological idiosyncrasies in the previous research. For instance, in Kamins' study (1990), the Tom Selleck, attractive endorser, was paired with a luxury car in which the consumers (Till & Busler, 1998, 2000) did not necessarily perceive the product as an attractive related product. Consequently, research results show no effect of the match-up hypothesis on the brand attitude or the purchase intention (Kamins, 1990).

In modern advertising and marketing, the match-up factor is considered crucial to the product/brand success (Farhat & Khan 2011; Kumar & Velavan, 2014). For instance, the fit between the celebrity Tiger Woods and Nike Golf make the brand successful (Simmer et al., 2009). Many recent studies indicated that the celebrity and product congruence is influential to the purchase intention (Boeing & Schurhaus, 2014; Simsek, 2014). Therefore, the current research contends that the match-up hypothesis may be more compelling to the purchase intention than earlier studies might suggest. Consequently, this dimension is proposed to be included in the framework for this research.

Likeability

Apart from the main celebrity credibility dimensions, several research investigations also suggest the significance of likeability as an additional dimension to select the celebrity endorser for promoting the product (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Knott & James, 2004; Mcquire, 1985; Pornpitakpan, 2003, 2004).

Recent studies have revealed that the liked celebrity endorser has a positive

impact on the purchase of the product (Premeaux, 2009; Prieler, Kohlbacher, Hagiwara & Arima, 2010; Simsek, 2014; Um, 2013). The current research proposes the inclusion of the likeability dimension of the celebrity to the existing celebrity credibility scale.

Source Credibility and Cultural Influences

The advertising messages and strategies should vary across different cultures especially Western and Eastern cultures. (Choi, Lee & Kim, 2005). Based on Hofstede's cultural model, Thailand is categorized as a collective culture with high-context communication style (Hofstede, 1984). In contrast to Western cultures, Thai cultural orientation is more interdependent and group oriented. In addition, the perception of a celebrity endorser varies based on the country and culture. For instance, Korean audiences perceive the celebrity endorsers as actors for adding entertainment in their advertising while American consumers perceive them as spokespersons for the advertising (Um, 2013). Consequently, it can be stated that the Western and the Eastern audiences perceive celebrity endorsers in advertising differently. Therefore, the criteria of selecting a celebrity endorser is expected to differ according to different cultures (Ferle & Choi, 2005).

Celebrity Credibility Research in Different Countries

The celebrity credibility model has been studied and validated in U.S. and other countries outside U.S. Originally, Ohanian (1991) studied the effect of the celebrity credibility dimensions on the purchase intention with four U.S. celebrities. The results showed that the expertise of the celebrity was the only significant factor influencing the respondents' purchase intention. Later, several celebrity credibility studies were

conducted in Asian countries. However, some studies revealed conflicting results than with those of Ohanian.

In Singapore, a further study on the impact of the celebrity endorsement on the purchase intention with Singaporean undergraduate students revealed similar reports. The results revealed that all three credibility variables, namely expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness had a positive effect on the purchase intention (Pornpitakpan, 2004).

In Malaysia, a study on the impact of the celebrity endorser credibility on female consumers using the skincare products revealed that all three source credibility dimensions were significant factors in influencing consumer's positive attitudes and purchase intentions (Muda et al., 2011).

In addition, a study on the importance of perceived endorser credibility using an undergraduate student sample in South Korea showed similar findings that the attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise characteristics of the source can influence the purchase intentions (Ferle & Choi, 2005).

Overall, this review has shown that the empirical findings regarding the effect of the celebrity credibility dimensions on the purchase intentions were inconsistent when comparing the United States (U.S.) and Asian countries. In line with most celebrity credibility studies in Asian countries, the current research examines the five sets of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Celebrity perceived attractiveness will positively influence the purchase intention of self-use for Thai consumers.
Hypothesis 2: Celebrity perceived expertise will positively influence the purchase intention of self-use for Thai consumers.
Hypothesis 3: Celebrity perceived trustworthiness will positively influence the

purchase intention of self-use for Thai consumers.

Hypothesis4: Perceived celebrity-product match-up will positively influence the purchase intention for self-use of Thai consumers.

Hypothesis 5: Celebrity likeability will positively influence the purchase intention of self-use for Thai consumers.

Methodology

Celebrity and Product Selection

Previous match-up research suggested that the research design in matching the celebrity and the product could not ensure the true reflection from the consumer's stance (Till & Busler, 1998, 2000). In order to bridge this methodological gap, the current study allows the respondents to self-select Thai celebrity names and the products matched with the chosen celebrity. The approach is reinforced by the notion that the celebrity and product congruence should come from the consumer perspective (Byrne, Whitehead & Breen, 2003). Additionally, consumers have diverse celebrity preferences that vary according to the target group (Hus & McDonald, 2002 quoted in Saleem, 2007: 130). As a result, the self-selection method is expected to reveal the true and diverse responses from different age groups of Thai consumers. A variety of celebrity names were mentioned by the respondents such as Urassaya Sperbund, Nattawut Skidjai, Nadech Kugimiya, Araya Alberta Hargate, Tan Passakornnnatee, Prin Suparat, Mario Maurer, and Kimberly Ann Tiamsiri. The examples of the most chosen types of product were drink, food, restaurants and consumer product such as soaps, toothpastes, and shampoos.

Measurement Instrument

The celebrity credibility was measured with fifteen items using six-point semantic differential scales following (Ohanian, 1990; Pornpitakpan, 2004). The celebrity likeability was measured with four items using a seven-point semantic differential scales adapted from (Tripp, Jensen, & Carlson, 1994, Um, 2008). The celebrity product match-up was measured with three nine-point semantic differential scales following (Till & Busler, 2000). The final section was designed to measure purchase intention, containing six-point semantic differential scales adapted from (Ohanian, 1990; Pornpitakpan, 2004).

Target Population and Sample

The target population of the study consisted of Thai people living in Bangkok aged 20 to 59 years old. They tend to be exposed to more media such as television, internet and mobile phone (National Statistical Office, 2014). Accordingly, this population was assumed to be more aware of celebrity endorsers in advertising and media. A stratified random sampling procedure was chosen as the sampling method of this study, undertaken by dividing the Bangkok population into four sub-age groups to be proportionate with the actual age distribution of the Population (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The demographic profile of the sample is given in Table 1.

Table 1 Profile of the sample

Demographic	Category	Number	Percent
Gender	Male	171	40.7
	Female	249	59.3
	Total	420	100
	20-29 years	105	25.0
Age	30-39 years	126	30.0
	40-49 years	109	26.0
	50-59 years	80	19.0
	Total	420	100

Statistical Analysis

The hypotheses were ultimately tested by structural equation modeling (SEM) using SPSS/AMOS. Based on Hair et al., (2010), the minimum sample size of structural equation modeling method for models with seven constructs or lower (in the range of more than twelve but lower than thirty observed variables) is 250 samples. Consequently, 420 consumer samples were deemed sufficient for the current study.

Results

The Measurement Model

This research employed the two-step structural equation modeling approach separating the measurement model (CFA) and the structural model. This approach ensured valid measurements before proceeding to the structural model (ibid. 2010). The full measurement model was developed by taking out items with low factor loadings while not violating the theoretical concepts. The summary of the measurement indicators is presented in Appendix A.

Table 2 shows the factor loading of all items higher than .6 (.63-.91) and the construct reliability (computed for Cronbach's Alpha) was higher than .7 (.76-.91). This measurement model achieved good validity and reliability.

Table 2 Construct Validity, Factor Loading and Reliability Analysis

Factor/item	Factor Loading	AVE	CR
Attractiveness (α=.906)			
Attractive	0.830	.716	0.910
Handsome/ Beautiful	0.910		
Elegant	0.845		
Sexy	0.796		
Expertise (α=.884)			
Experienced	0.783	0.657	0.885
Knowledgeable	0.783		
Qualified	0.838		
Skilled	0.837		
Trustworthiness (α=.877)			
Honest	0.780	0.709	0.879
Reliable	0.873		
Sincere	0.869		
Match-up (α=.840)			
Belong	0.822	0.651	0.849
Go together	0.794		
Fit together	0.805		
Likeability (α=.755)			
Pleasant	0.632	0.514	0.759
Agreeable	0.756		
Popular	0.756		
Purchase intention (α=.762)			
Find information about the product	0.819	0.541	0.778
Consider buying the product	0.662		
Purchase the product	0.716		

Table 3 Comparisons of Goodness-of-Fit Measures Between Models

	Measurement Model	Structural Model	CelebrityCredibilityModel
Chi-Square (χ^2)	460.82	460.82	431.80
Degrees of Freedom	155	155	152
Normed Chi-Square (χ^2/df)	2.97	2.97	2.84
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.94	0.94	0.94
Goodness-of-Fit (GFI)	0.90	0.90	0.91
Tucker-Lewis Coefficient (TLI)	0.92	0.92	0.93
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.07	0.07	0.07

AMOS (table 3) computed the full measurement model fit. The goodness-of-fit

indices indicated a good fit between measurement model and data. Specifically, the

normed chi-square values of 2.97 were below the maximum acceptable level of 5. The

CFI value, .94, and the TLI value, .92, were greater than the .92 threshold levels. The

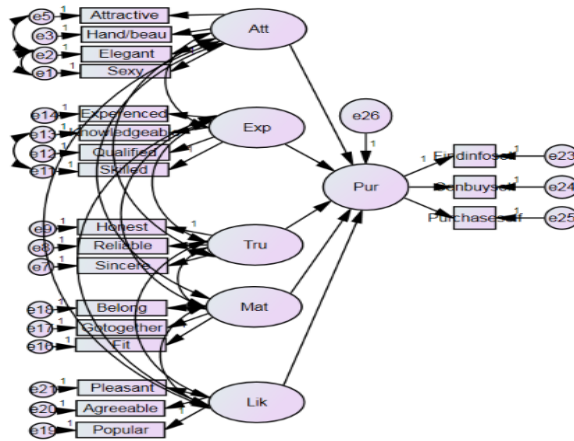RMSEA value was .07 indicating good fit.

Figure 1 Structural Equation Modeling: Celebrity Credibility Model

The Structural Model

The next step was to develop a structural model to test the correlations between constructs. The structural model is a saturated structural model having the same fit statistics with the fit statistics of measurement model (Table 3). In order to improve the model fit, the paths not estimated in the model are hypothesized (freed) using "modification indices" (ibid. 2010). In addition, the within-construct error covariance was run in order to maintain the theoretical justification and unidimensionality (Figure 1). After model modification, the final celebrity credibility model was compared with the previous models. The results show the celebrity credibility model has the Chi-Square (χ^2) value of 431.80 with degrees of freedom at 152. This led to a decrease in the Normed Chi-Square (χ^2/df) to 2.84 (less than 5). The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was .94, which is above the acceptable .90. The CFI of the celebrity credibility model was equal to the measurement model and the initial structural model. The Goodness-of-Fit (GFI) was slightly improved to be .91 (above .90) while the Tucker-Lewis

Coefficient (TLI) was higher at .93. The RMSEA indices of the measurement, structural,

and celebrity credibility model were equal at .07. Overall, the celebrity credibility model

achieves a good fit and has a better fit than the measurement and structural model.

Table 4 Result of the Structural Model

	Path Coefficient	P value	Result
Attractiveness➔Purchase Intention (H1)	.21	.004**	Supported
Expertise➔ Purchase Intention (H2)	.39	***	Supported
Trustworthiness➔ Purchase Intention (H3)	-.18	.003**	Force Rejected as negative
Match-up➔ Purchase Intention (H4)	.12	.352	Rejected
Likeability➔ Purchase Intention (H5)	-.15	.338	Rejected

Table 4 shows the hypothesis test supplied by AMOS.   The path analysis

indicates that only two of the hypothesized five-celebrity credibility constructs positively

affect the purchase intention. Expertise was the most impactful construct affecting the

purchase intention positively (p<0.001, standardized regression weight=0.39). Similarly,

the Attractiveness construct positively affected the purchase intention (p<0.01,

standardized regression weight=0.21). Hence, the null hypotheses (H1, H2) fail to be

accepted and alternate hypotheses (H1, H2) are accepted (p > 0.05).

It should be noted that though the structural models show failure to accept a

null hypothesis, indicating that the trustworthiness construct significantly affects the

purchase intention (p < 0.01). Nonetheless, the standardized regression weight of the

trustworthiness construct is -0.18. Here, the null hypothesis (H3) is a failed acceptance

and alternate hypothesis (H3) is accepted which indicates good regression, however

as the regression weight is negative it is not acceptable in this situation.

Lastly, from the structural model the (null) hypothesized relationships between

match-up and purchase intention is supported (p>0.05). Likewise, the celebrity

likeability does not significantly affect the purchase intention. For both the null hypotheses (H4, H5) are accepted and alternate hypotheses (H4, H5) are rejected ($p > 0.05$). The celebrity credibility model is visualized in Figure 2.
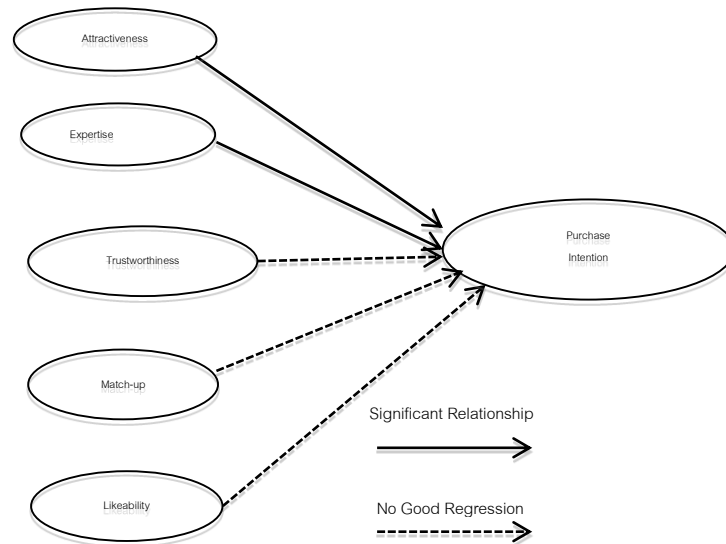

Figure 2 Celebrity Credibility Model

Discussion

From the model tested, the modified sub-constructs and constructs contribute to knowledge regarding the celebrity credibility model for Thai consumers. Specifically, the results suggest the scale's factor structure (attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, match-up, and likeability) fit Thai consumers well. However, in terms of the impact of the celebrity credibility on the behavioral intention, not all dimensions of celebrity are likely to influence the purchase intention for Thai consumers. Only perceived expertise and perceived attractiveness dimensions of the celebrity can positively impact purchase intention of Thai consumers. In addition, expertise is the

most significant factor affecting the purchase intention which was similarly observed in

Ohanian's (1991) studies on the U.S. samples. Nonetheless, the current study revealed

different results from other celebrity credibility studies in Asian countries such as

Singapore, Malaysia, and South Korea. The findings showed that the two

trustworthiness items (trustworthy and dependable) were dropped from the

measurement model. Additionally, the path analysis revealed that the perceived

celebrity trustworthiness dimension had the least impact on the purchase intention for

Thai consumers. The results may denote that the consumers are skeptical of the

celebrities endorsement because they are paid (Ohanian, 1991). Moreover, in current

environments, consumers also tend to believe in other influencers such as friends, other

consumers (Rataya Mahasamut & Warat Karuchit, 2016).

However, the current research also broadens the literature that the celebrity

selection criteria used in that group of Asian countries is not necessarily applicable in

another Asian country. The phenomenon is supported by the notion that the celebrity

endorsement is culture specific (Bhatt et al., 2013; Leslie, 2011). Finally, these findings

have implications for the advertisers and marketers in Thailand that the expertise and

attractiveness dimensions should be the major criteria used when selecting the 'right'

celebrity endorser for Thai consumers.

Limitation and Future Research

Although this study expands knowledge of the celebrity selection for Thais, It

can be tempered by the limitations in terms of the generalization of the findings to other

cultures or audiences. In addition, the findings of this research are limited to the

celebrities and the product categories used in the study. Due to the geographical constraint, the samples of the present research will be only those who live in Bangkok during the time of the studies. It is recommended that the future celebrity credibility research should expand to other regions of Thailand for enhancing the generalizability of the results.

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Appendix A

Dimensions	Indicators	Measurement Model
Attractiveness	Attractive/Unattractive,	✓
	Classy/Not classy,	✗
	Handsome-Beautiful/Ugly,	✓
	Elegant/Plain,	✓
	Sexy/Not sexy	✓
Expertise	Expert/Not an expert	✗
	Experienced/Inexperienced	✓
	Knowledgeable/Unknowledgeable	✓
	Qualified/Unqualified	✓
	Skilled/Unskilled	✓
Trustworthiness	Dependable/Undependable	✗
	Honest/Dishonest	✓
	Reliable/Unreliable	✓
	Sincere/Insincere	✓
	Trustworthy/Untrustworthy	✗
Match-up	Does not belong with/belongs with	✓
	Does not go together/goes together	✓
	Does not fit together/fits together	✓
Likeability	Very likeable/very unlikeable	✗
	Very pleasant/very unpleasant	✓
	Very agreeable/very disagreeable	✓
	Very popular/very unpopular	✓