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The Mediating Effect of Herd Behavior and Brand Attitude towards the Impact of Spokesman Credibility, Source Fit, and Online Word-of-Mouth on Purchase Intention

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Abstract: Product endorsement has become a common marketing method. Many companies hire a famous person to act as the spokesman for the product and brand. They want to use the celebrity's fame and attractiveness to promote their products and brands. However, is every celebrity suitable to be the spokesman for a product? In addition, in the era of advanced technology, whether the comments on the Internet and the credibility of the spokesman affect consumers' purchase intention through herd behavior. And whether the credibility of the spokesman and the degree of source fit (the degree of fit between the spokesman and the product and brand) affect consumers' purchase intention through brand attitude and heard behavior. To our best knowledge, no studies in the research literature have explored the relationships between spokesman credibility, source fit, herd behavior, brand attitude, online word-of-mouth, and purchase intention, where herd behavior and brand attitude are mediating variables. The research questionnaire was designed and distributed using an online questionnaire format, and the distribution period was from 6 April 2022, to 12 April 2022. In this study, a total of 203 valid questionnaires were obtained. According to the results, both online word-of-mouth and spokesman credibility had a significantly positive impact on consumers' herd behavior, which will significantly increase consumers' purchase intention. The credibility of the spokesman also had a significantly positive impact on consumers' brand attitudes and, therefore, will significantly increase consumers' purchase intention. Theoretical and managerial implications are provided.

Keywords: spokesman credibility; online word-of-mouth; herd behavior; brand attitude; purchase intention

1. Introduction

In this fast information society, it is a challenge to not only make consumers receive information but also to create an impression and interest in the information. The original methods of product and service marketing in traditional media are no longer effective in quickly attracting the attention of consumers, including social marketing, electronic reimbursement marketing, advertising marketing, endorsement marketing, and many other common marketing methods. Among them, endorsement marketing refers to the use of well-known experts, celebrities, etc., as publicity media for companies and organizations to promote a certain product or service so as to shorten the communication distance with consumers and make consumers willing to buy. Consumers will remember a product because it is endorsed by a famous person, even if the consumer is not a fan of the spokesman [1]. In 2021, McDonald's launched the BTS meal in 49 countries around the world, and according to the statistics, the first seven days of the event saw a 12% increase in traffic compared to the previous week [2]. In addition, YouGov, a market research company, found that 46% of Britons said they spent a lot of money on celebrity-recommended clothes because of

endorsement recommendations [3]. But research also has shown that advertising effectiveness is strongly related to the spokesman's image, personality, expertise, and fit with the product [4]. People will change their original behavior because they are afraid of being different from the public, and herd behavior will arouse consumers' willingness to buy to keep up with social trends [5–7]. Additionally, because the spokesman endorses a product or service for the company, the credibility of the spokesman will also affect consumers' brand attitude towards the company [8]. Therefore, whether the purchase intention will be influenced by the spokesman's credibility through herd behavior and brand attitude is one of the motivations of this study [8].

Although consumers' purchase intentions will increase due to the spokesman's endorsement, consumers will also be more cautious before deciding on purchase intentions [9]. In the past, traditional word-of-mouth marketing methods have formed online word-of-mouth methods due to the evolution of technology. Before purchasing a product, consumers use the Internet to search for the product and brand and read the comments and experiences of other consumers on the Internet [10]. Afterward, consumers' purchase intentions will change with the information in the reviews, demonstrating an instance of herd behavior [11]. This study aims to investigate whether online word-of-mouth affects consumers' purchase intention through herd behavior.

The difference between this study and previous related research is that the previous related research mainly focuses on the direct influence of online word-of-mouth, spokesman credibility, and source fit (the degree of fit between the spokesman and the product and brand) on purchase intention. To our best knowledge, no studies in the research literature have explored the relationships between spokesman credibility, source fit, herd behavior, brand attitude, online word-of-mouth, and purchase intention, where herd behavior and brand attitude are mediating variables. According to the research background and motivation described above, this study proposes the following objectives:

1. Examine the impact of online word-of-mouth and spokesman credibility on herd behavior.
2. Examine the impact of spokesman credibility and source fit (the degree of fit between the spokesman and the product and brand) on brand attitudes.
3. Examine the impact of herd behavior and brand attitude on purchase intention.
4. Examine whether the credibility of the spokesman has a significantly positive impact on consumers' brand attitudes and, therefore, will significantly increase consumers' purchase intention.
5. Examine the impact of both online word-of-mouth and spokesman credibility on consumers' herd behavior, which will significantly increase consumers' purchase intention.

Following the introduction, Section 2 presents the literature review. Section 3 covers the research framework and six research hypotheses. Section 4 presents the research methodology, including variable operational definition and measurement and questionnaire design. Section 5 presents the research results, including statistics of the sample, reliability, validity, correlation analysis and model fit, path analysis, and mediating effect analysis. Section 6 discusses the research results and discussions. Section 7 discusses limitations and proposes directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Online Word-of-Mouth

Online word-of-mouth means that consumers communicate online with each other about the situation of the consumption market and freely share their experiences and ideas about consumption with each other. However, the people who transmit the information online are different from marketing personnel, which constitutes online word-of-mouth [12,13]. Chatterjee [14] believes that online word-of-mouth refers to the oral communication between sender and receiver online, and the summary of communication is non-commercial content related to goods, brands, services, or suppliers. Although the messages conveyed by online word-of-mouth are different from advertisements, on-

line word-of-mouth is provided by consumers with their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences. It is considered non-commercial information, but it does affect consumers' purchasing decisions. Online word-of-mouth can be described as a communication method that provides consumers with product information, seller information, or service status through Internet technology [13,15].

Online word-of-mouth can be divided into positive word-of-mouth and negative word-of-mouth. Online word-of-mouth can be used as a method of publicity for companies and enterprises and can also be a method of destroying a company's brand name [16]. If online word-of-mouth is classified as a customer complaint, it is negative online word-of-mouth, such as a bad shopping experience, complaining about the product, disagreeing with the product manufacturer, etc. All of which are negative reviews. Online positive word-of-mouth can not only reduce the overhead of publicity costs but also increase revenue if positive online word-of-mouth successfully captures the attention of consumers.

Online word-of-mouth is mainly transmitted through the Internet as a medium. With the advancement of technology, it can be transmitted through online forums, chat rooms, and news groups [17]. Online word-of-mouth refers to consumers expressing and transmitting positive and negative evaluations of a certain product on the Internet. Consumers share their experiences and feelings after using it, which has a positive impact on other consumers' purchasing decisions and choices [18]. Harrison-Walker [19] proposed that, compared with traditional word-of-mouth and print media, online word-of-mouth is more suitable for creating consumer attitudes and behaviors. Phelps, Lewis, and Mobilio [20] feel that when consumers collect information on the Internet and make purchasing decisions, online word-of-mouth spreads faster and has a wider range, so online word-of-mouth is more appealing than traditional word-of-mouth. Wirtz and Chew [21] conducted research in three dimensions: the degree of consumer willingness to pass word-of-mouth, the positive and negative degree, and the possibility of recommending a purchase.

2.2. Spokesman Credibility

Product endorsement has become a common advertising and marketing method. Many companies invite celebrities with high reputations to endorse their products and use the popularity of celebrities to promote products. When consumers know that a particular celebrity endorses a product, they will transfer the impression of this spokesman to the product. This theory is based on consumers' trust in the spokesman and hopes that this trust will also be passed on to this product, increasing consumers' willingness to buy [22–24]. McCracken [25] believes that when a celebrity endorses a product, consumers will reflect the celebrity's impression of the product. Relatively speaking, if the celebrity has a positive impression of being popular, honest, etc., in the minds of consumers, it will contribute to the positive influence of the product and the willingness of consumers to buy.

The definition of a spokesman is to speak on behalf of a party. On the other hand, many companies or manufacturers will use well-known and popular celebrities or Internet celebrities as the company's or manufacturer's product spokesman, informing the public through the popularity of the spokesman. Freiden [26] compared the three marketing methods of celebrity, national advertising, and TV advertising. Although the cost of celebrity endorsement is considerable, the cost of TV advertising is extremely high, and the positive impact of celebrity endorsement is the highest. McCracken [25] mentioned that for the time being, a celebrity spokesman is defined as a publicly recognized figure appearing in an advertisement with a product endorsed by a celebrity spokesman. Celebrity spokesmen not only refer to movie and TV stars but also include celebrities from sports, politics, business, and art.

A spokesman is chosen as a product spokesman depending on their credibility, with a highly credible spokesman expected to have a more positive impact than a less credible celebrity [24,27]. Ohanian [28,29] and many scholars define the credibility of a spokesman mainly based on three factors: professionalism, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. The definitions for each factor are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Credibility dimensions.

Spokesman Credibility Factors	Definition	References
Professionalism	Refers to the degree to which the spokesman has professional knowledge, technology, and experience. Ohanian (1990) believes that the expertise of the spokesman is more important than the attractiveness and reliability of the spokesman in explaining purchase intention.	[23,28,30]
Trustworthiness	Refers to the degree of honesty, fairness, and credibility of the spokesman. In the transmission of information, usually, the spokesman with high reliability will have a higher persuasive effect. Reliability plays a role in how much consumers trust the spokesman. Ohanian (1990) believes that reliability is the degree of trust that dominates consumers in the spokesman or commodity. In addition, Bower and Landreth (2001) believe that the relationship between the spokesman and the product will affect the credibility of the spokesman, and the spokesman that most people like will improve consumers' perception of the reliability of the spokesman.	[24,28,31]
Attractiveness	Refers to the overall attractiveness of the spokesman, including appearance, personality traits, and personal charm. Advertising and communication research institutes suggest that physical attractiveness is an important basis for a person's first impression and initial judgment. Lively, popular, etc., are often used to describe the attractiveness of a spokesman.	[32,33]

A description of different types of spokesmen is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Types of spokesmen.

Celebrity	Celebrity endorsement refers to the appearance of a recognized person in an advertisement to represent a product or service [34]. Celebrity endorsements include entertainers, actors, athletes, artists, etc., [24,25].
Expert	Expert endorsement refers to being perceived by a brand as possessing expertise, training, and public authority [33,35]. Usually, expert spokesmen are identified by their name plus a slogan [26].
Consumer	Consumer endorsement refers to an amateur who is not recognized by the public as a public figure and shares the experience of using the product normally, but the spokesman has no professional knowledge about the product [26].
Company President (CEO)	The company president and CEO endorsement refer to the president and person in charge of the product company, who recognizes his own product and acts as a spokesman for the product [35].

2.3. Source Fit

Although an advertising spokesman can have a positive impact on products and brands, companies often focus only on the attractiveness of the spokesman, believing that a well-known spokesman can increase the sales and exposure of products. Some scholars have carried out research on the degree of fit between the spokesman and the product and brand. However, if the template of the advertising spokesman and the consumer's cognitive structure of the product and brand are consistent with each other, assimilation will occur. Therefore, consumers will have a positive attitude [36]. Parekh and Kanekar [37] experimented with the reflection of physical attractiveness and product variety in product evaluation. They individually placed attractive supermodels and unattractive supermodels to endorse products related to beauty (soap and shampoo) and products completely unrelated to beauty. After the survey, it was found that the combination of attractive appearances and beauty-related products increased the advertising effect. However, the combination of unattractive supermodel endorsements and beauty-related

products did not increase the advertising effect. Bower and Landreth [31] also believed that products related to beauty have the most effective advertising effect if they are endorsed by a highly attractive spokesman, as a highly attractive spokesman will make consumers more trustworthy.

However, some scholars have also put forward the exact opposite argument. Debevec and Iyer [38] found that if women endorse stronger masculine products, the effect will be better than when men endorse them. In addition, if men are used to endorse more feminine products, the effect will be better than that of women endorsing them. Therefore, if the image of the spokesman is different from the fit of the product, and there is a gap between the two, it will bring consumers a new look and feel [36]. Lee and Faber [39] believe that when the combination of product spokesman and the product is different from the general combination, it is unique and easier to gain consumers' attention, thus positively affecting consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions.

2.4. Herd Behavior

Herd behavior, also known as the bandwagon effect, refers to people who follow the thoughts and behaviors of the masses under the influence of groups and society. In 1951, the social psychologist Solomon E. Asch started a series of research [40]. His research was to investigate the reactions and behaviors of individuals in groups if they faced different ideas or had different opinions from others. In one of the experiments, Asch found that about one-third of the participants in the experiment would obey the group's opinions, even if the group's thoughts and behaviors were wrong. Individuals changed their own thoughts and behaviors because most of the group had certain thoughts or behaviors. Research points out that individuals are often influenced by the choices of others and tend to follow the common beliefs and lifestyles of mainstream groups, mainly because of a desire to integrate into mainstream society and the fear of being different from others [31,41].

Social psychologist Bibb Latane [42] proposed the Social Impact Theory. The Social Impact Theory mentions three factors to determine the degree to which an individual accepts the influence of the customer: the strength of the collective, the closeness of the collective to the individual, and the number of people around the group. Therefore, herd behavior is when a person is in a group, and the pressure of the group makes the person agree with the group's ideas and practices [43].

After many social psychologists discuss herd behavior, many marketing scientists or scholars in other fields have observed and applied herd behavior from the perspective of other fields. Although scholars in various fields hold almost the same concept of herd behavior, each focus on different points of view. Scholars in sociology believe that herd behavior refers to an individual changing his or her own behavior when faced with the pressure of different thoughts and behaviors of the group [44,45]. For scholars in the marketing field, the connotation of herd behavior means that consumers will follow the thoughts and behaviors of most people in order to be recognized by the group and meet the expectations of the public [43,46].

3. Research Hypotheses

3.1. The Relationship between Online Word-of-Mouth and Herd Behavior

Burnkant and Cousieneau [47] found consumers also take other people's comments and feelings about products as the source of information when they make purchasing decisions, so the influence of information or group norms will affect consumers' self-judgment and evaluation [48]. According to Tnooz [49], a survey conducted by PhoCusWright for a global travel market research institute showed that more than 80% of travelers read a lot of reviews before deciding which hotel to book, and 53% of travelers were reluctant to book a hotel without reviews. When consumers read a large number of comments on a particular issue, they tend to interpret the issue in question as being popular [14,50]. There is a higher degree of message herd and norms than conformists. Therefore, people who choose restaurants to stick to the rules were often more likely to be persuaded and moved

by the content and quantity of online word-of-mouth and, thus, were more likely to change their behavior [50,51]. Bickart and Schindle [17] found in their research that when the credibility of online word-of-mouth is higher, it will indirectly affect consumers' attitudes and behaviors. Consumers even observe the buying behavior of others to check whether their buying decisions are accepted by the public and society [52]. Based on the arguments above, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H1: *Online word-of-mouth has a significantly positive impact on herd behavior.*

3.2. The Relationship between Spokesman Credibility and Herd Behavior

For consumers, attractive spokesmen are more influential than less attractive spokesmen [53]. Consumers often use others as a benchmark for evaluating product quality, and especially when consumers themselves do not have sufficient information, they will follow the decisions of others, which will make consumers feel safer and more at ease [40,54,55]. The higher the credibility of the spokesman, the greater the herd behavior of consumers will be [56]. The professionalism of the spokesman appears to be the most effective influence when promoting higher-priced products [57]. Ohanian [28] believes that a trusted spokesman, whether he is an expert or not, will be persuasive because the spokesman is trustworthy. Most people are accustomed to believing what the majority believe [51] and believing that others have better information [58]. Chairunnisa and Dalimunthe [59] believe that following the investment methods of Internet celebrities can help investors gain investment confidence. Investors want to obtain the most reward from the least risk, so herd behavior is good for investors because investors' decisions are based on the actions of Internet celebrities. In addition, for investors, the professionalism and experience of Internet celebrities in investment is also a credibility factor in deciding whether to follow the crowd. Based on the above literature, it can be known that consumers will decide whether to follow and conform to the credibility of the spokesman (attractiveness, professionalism, reliability). In addition, when consumers do not have sufficient information, they usually feel that they will follow the recommendations of the public and others. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: *Spokesman credibility has a significantly positive effect on herd behavior.*

3.3. The Relationship between Spokesman Credibility and Brand Attitude

If consumers have positive thoughts and attitudes toward the spokesman, consumers will also have positive thoughts and attitudes toward the brand [60]. Spokesman credibility is the most useful and effective tool for consumers to have confidence in the brand and to feel as though it is reliable [28]. McCracken [25] believes that the brand will be influenced by the spokesman to increase the value of the brand, resulting in the need for a consistent relationship between the spokesman and the brand [61]. When comparing a low-credibility spokesman with a high-credibility spokesman, a high-credibility spokesman has a positive impact on brand attitude [62]. Celebrity endorsements can increase brand awareness, effectively reach target markets, and create brand positivity, which is why celebrities are considered to be one of the most effective ways to build long-term brands [63]. Based on the above literature, it can be known that consumers will enhance their brand attitude towards the brand because of the credibility of the spokesman (attractiveness, professionalism, reliability). This study thus proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: *Spokesman credibility has a significantly positive impact on brand attitudes.*

3.4. The Relationship between Source Fit and Brand Attitude

Teng et al. [64] pointed out that the source fit (the degree of fit between the spokesman and the product and brand) between celebrities and celebrity endorsements is one of the key factors affecting consumers' attitudes towards the brand. The increased fit between the

spokesman and endorsed products and brands has a positive impact on brand attitudes because the consistency between celebrities and products and brands appropriately conveys the brand image to consumers [65]. Consumers' trust in advertising attitudes, brand attitudes, and the spokesman may be enhanced when the degree of fit between the spokesman and the product is high [66]. Asha [67], in the field of jewelry marketing, once proposed that the degree of adaptation of celebrity endorsements will affect advertising, and the study found that if the degree of adaptation between celebrities and brands is high, it will affect consumers' willingness to buy through brand attitudes. The matching hypothesis explains how celebrities and messages influence consumers' evaluations of products and advertisements. According to the matching hypothesis, a spokesman can be persuasive to consumers only when the product image of the spokesman matches [37]. Some studies have pointed out that the degree of fit between the spokesman and the product has an impact on advertising effectiveness (brand attitude, advertising attitude, etc.) [65,68,69]. Based on the arguments above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: *Source fit (the degree of fit between the spokesman and the product and brand) has a significantly positive impact on brand attitudes.*

3.5. The Relationship between Herd Behavior and Purchase Intention

Deutsch and Gerard [51] proposed that consumers are most often influenced by normative or informative social influences in their purchasing decisions. Midgley et al. [70] showed that the majority of the clothing styles purchased by the study participants were styles that were favored by the majority of others because they met the expectations of their peers. Luxury goods may also experience herd behavior because goods purchased as freely assignable products are affected by personal taste and preference, but everyday items are not affected by herd behavior to the same extent as luxury goods [55]. Consumers can show their social and economic status by purchasing luxury goods. At the same time, consumers can use such products to show that they belong to a group with the same taste and vision. For example, following the trend refers to purchasing items and brands that identify with a particular group [71]. Consumption herd is because consumers want to gain the approval of a certain group, and they have the desire to buy products that they did not plan to buy [50]. Based on the above literature, it can be seen that consumers will buy a certain product because they want to behave like others, follow trends, or gain the approval of others. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H5**: *Herd behavior significantly increases purchase intention.*

3.6. The Relationship between Brand Attitude and Purchase Intention

Brand attitudes play an important role in consumers' purchase intentions [72,73]. When consumers have an emotional response to a brand attitude, the emotional response will make the consumer have a positive purchase intention for goods and services [72]. Many researchers have explored the relationship between brand attitude and purchase intention and found that brand attitude has a significantly positive impact on purchase intention [73,74]. According to Lutz, MacKenzie, and Belch et al. [56], consumer attitudes toward a brand are consumers' emotional responses to brand advertising. It is related to whether consumers' purchase intention of the brand is positive or negative. Fishbein and Ajzen [75] found that there was a positive correlation between consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, so most studies support the hypothesis that consumer attitudes, directly and indirectly, affect purchase intentions [76,77]. Consumers' attitudes toward brands have a positive impact on purchase intention [78]. Consumers' attitudes toward brands have a great impact on consumers' purchase intentions because attitudes are one of the determinants of intention, and behavioral intention is a psychological variable, which is the mediating variable of attitude and actual action [79]. Based on the above literature, it can be known that the consumers' purchase intention will depend on the

consumers' willingness to buy. When consumers' attitude towards a brand is positive, it will also affect consumers' purchase intention to increase. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H6: *Brand attitude significantly increases purchase intention.*

Figure 1 shows the research framework for this study. This study believes that consumers' comments on the Internet and their experience after using the product will affect the herd behavior of consumers who read the comments and affect their purchase intention. The degree to which the spokesman makes consumers believe or like a product or brand will also indirectly affect the consumer's herd behavior and the brand attitude, and then affect the consumer's purchase intention. The degree of fit between the product and the spokesman will also affect consumers' attitudes toward the brand, which in turn affects consumers' willingness to buy.
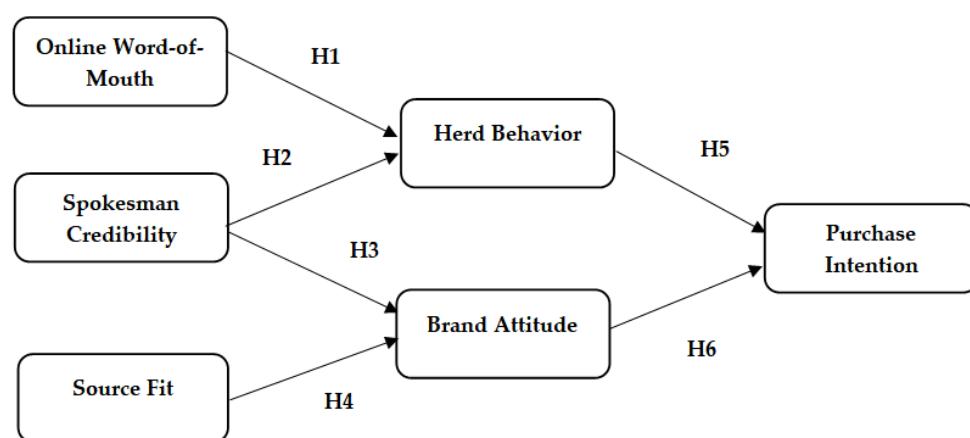
Figure 1. Research framework.

4. Research Methodology

Figure 1 shows the research framework indicating purchase intention as the independent variable, while online word-of-mouth, spokesman credibility, source fit (the degree of fit between the spokesman and the product and brand), herd behavior, and brand attitude are dependent variables. Herd behavior and brand attitude mediate the effects of online word-of-mouth, spokesman credibility, and source fit (the degree of fit between the spokesman and the product and brand) on purchase intention. Following the introduction of Figure 1, Section 4.1 presents the variable operational definition and measurement. Section 4.2 covers the questionnaire design. The research questionnaire was designed and distributed using an online questionnaire format, and the distribution period was from 6 April 2022, to 12 April 2022. A total of 212 online questionnaires were recovered, of which 9 were incompletely answered, and the number of valid questionnaires after deduction was 203.

4.1. Variable Operational Definition and Measurement

The operational definitions of online word-of-mouth, spokesman credibility, source fit (the degree of fit between the spokesman and the product and brand), herd behavior, brand attitude, and purchase intention are shown in Table 3.

4.2. Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire design of this research is divided into parts. The first part included watching the video and filling in the questions according to the spokesman in the video. The second part was online word-of-mouth, the third part was the credibility of the spokesman, the fourth part was source fit (the degree of fit between the spokesman and the product

and brand), the fifth part was herd behavior, the sixth part was brand attitude, the seventh part was purchase intention, and the eighth part was the basic information of filling out the questionnaire. The questionnaire was measured on a Likert 7-point scale, ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Somewhat Disagree; (4) Average; (5) Slightly Agree; (6) Agree; and (7) Strongly Agree. The participant responded according to the information in the video and filled in the degree of agreement or disagreement using the 1–7 scale.

Table 3. Variable and operational definition.

Variable	Operational Definition	References
Online Word-of-Mouth	Refers to the oral communication between the sender and the receiver. The summary of the communication is the non-commercial content related to the goods, brands or services, and suppliers.	[14]
Spokesman Credibility	A spokesman is chosen as a product spokesman based on their credibility, with a highly credible spokesman expected to have a more positive impact than a less credible celebrity.	[27]
Source Fit	Consumers have a positive attitude when their cognitive structure of products and brands is consistent with that of the spokesman.	[65]
Herd Behavior	Individuals will change their behaviors in order to integrate into mainstream society because most others have certain thoughts and behaviors and tend to follow the common beliefs and lifestyles of mainstream groups.	[41]
Brand Attitude	Positive or negative attitudes of consumers towards a brand. Brand attitude is the overall evaluation of the brand by customers.	[80]
Purchase Intention	Consumers are willing to have the possibility of purchasing decisions for their products.	[81]

In the questionnaire of this study, the Zeng Bian Mian endorsed by Mr. Guocheng Zeng, which became popular in 2015, was used as an example. At that time, Zeng noodles were popular all over Taiwan, and because the TV programs that Mr. Guocheng Zeng participated in were well-known food programs, this study believes that Mr. Guocheng Zeng is professional and reliable in terms of spokesman credibility. Therefore, this study used the example of Zeng Bian Mian as a research paradigm. Table 4 provides the measure items of the questionnaire.

Table 4. Measure items of the research questionnaire.

Research Variables	Measure Items	References
Online Word-of-Mouth	1. For me, the product word-of-mouth information provided by the current review sites can meet my needs. 2. I believe that the information provided on the review sites is reliable. 3. I consider the information provided on the review sites to be objective. 4. I think the information provided on the review sites is easy to understand.	[19,82]
Spokesman Credibility	1. I like the energy of the spokesman. 2. Manufacturers and brands choose the spokesman to endorse the product because he is attractive. 3. I think the spokesman is popular because of his likable appearance. 4. I think the message conveyed by the spokesman for this product is trustworthy. 5. Manufacturers and brands choose this spokesman to endorse this product because he is more sincere. 6. Because of the good image of the spokesman, he can endorse different kinds of products. 7. I think the spokesman has a wealth of knowledge about social trends and has a positive image effect on other endorsed products. 8. I think the spokesman must at least excel in his professional field in order to be a successful spokesman.	[28,30]

Table 4. *Cont.*

Research Variables	Measure Items	References
Source Fit	1. I think it is appropriate for the spokesman to endorse the brand. 2. I think the spokesman's endorsement of the brand can be effective. 3. I think the spokesman is commensurate with the brand's portfolio. 4. I think the spokesman and the brand can be matched with each other. 5. I think the spokesman fits the overall image of the brand.	[65]
Herd Behavior	1. I will care whether other people like this product. 2. I will feel more at ease if I choose the same product as most people. 3. I will observe the reaction of others after purchasing to determine my own information on this product. 4. When I choose this product, I have consulted others' opinions.	[51]
Brand Attitude	1. I think the product quality or service of this brand is good. 2. My overall impression of the brand is good. 3. Compared to the unbranded product, I think the branded product is reliable. 4. I think the brand's product or service is satisfactory. 5. I think the brand's brand can be trusted. 6. I love the brand. 7. I think the brand is a very good one. 8. I have a positive attitude towards the brand.	[83]
Purchase Intention	1. When I'm shopping, I prioritize items from that brand. 2. If the brand launches a new product that I need, I will consider buying it. 3. I would consider buying a product from this brand.	[81]

5. Research Results

In this study, data analysis and hypothesis testing were carried out through a questionnaire survey. For the recovered valid questionnaires, Excel files were individually created, and SPSS 24 and LISREL 10.3 were used as data analysis tools. Section 5.1 provides an analysis of the basic data of the samples to understand the basic types of the samples. Section 5.2 presents an analysis of the reliability and validity of the variables to understand the consistency and correctness of the measurement results. Furthermore, testing of the correlation and fitness of each variable was conducted, as well as the use of the linear structural relationship model to test the fitness of the structural equation model. In Section 5.3, path analysis was carried out to verify the research hypotheses proposed in this study.

5.1. Statistics of the Sample

The research questionnaire was designed and distributed using an online questionnaire format, and the distribution period was from 6 April 2022, to 12 April 2022. A total of 212 online questionnaires were recovered, of which 9 were incompletely answered, and the number of valid questionnaires after deduction was 203. Demographic variables in this study included gender, age, and education.
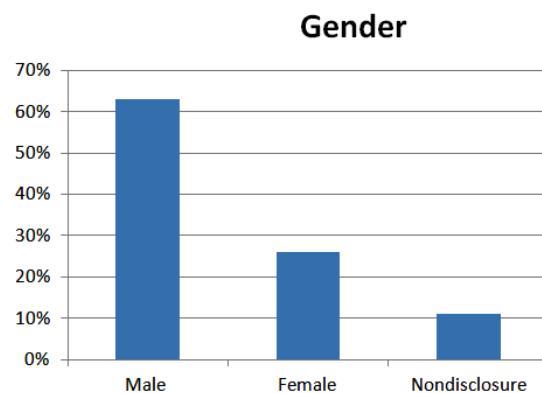
1. Gender

The majority of respondents in the valid sample were females, with 139 female respondents accounting for 63% of the total. The number of male respondents was 52, accounting for 26% of the total number. In addition, 12 people did not want to disclose their gender, accounting for 11% of the total number. The histogram of gender is shown in Figure 2.

2. Age

In this study, the age group of the respondents who were 15–24 years old was the largest group, with a total of 115 people accounting for 57% of the total number. The age group of the respondents who were 25–34 years old was the second largest group, with a total of 56 people accounting for 27% of the total number. The third largest group was older than 45 years old, with a total of 26 people accounting for 13% of the samples. Among the recovered samples, the age group 35–44 years old was the smallest group, with six people

in total accounting for 3% of the recovered samples. The histogram of age is shown in Figure 3.
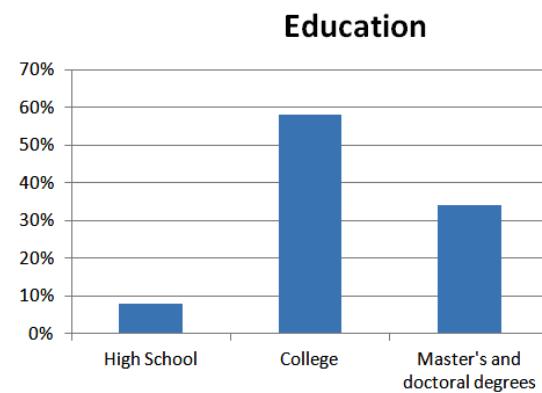

Figure 2. Demographic variable: gender.
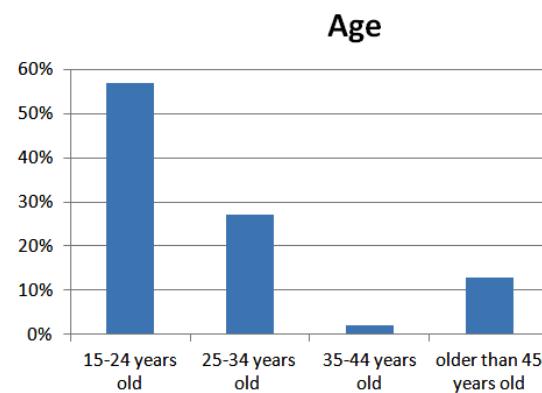
Figure 3. Demographic variable: age.

3.   Education

Among the education level of the respondents in this study, the high school group had 17 respondents, accounting for 8%. The college group had the largest number of respondents, with a total of 118 people accounting for 58%. The number of respondents in the master's and doctoral degree group was 68, accounting for 34% of the sample. The histogram of education is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Demographic variable: education.

5.2. Reliability, Validity, and Correlation Analysis

For any instrument to be considered useful, it must be both a reliable and a valid measure of each variable assessed. Reliability refers to the consistency with repeated trials

and indicates the extent to which differences in the measurement of data are attributable to random variability inherent in the testing method rather than to actual differences in each variable studied. Validity refers to how well the instrument truly assesses the characteristic it is intended to study. This is referred to as the instrument's accuracy or external consistency. In contrast to reliability, validity measures the nonrandom, systematic error inherent in an instrument. Correlation is often used as a way to measure reliability and validity.

5.2.1. Reliability Analysis
Composite Reliability (CR)

Reliability refers to whether the measurement results are reliable and tests whether the regression results obtained by the constructs of multiple questions proposed in this study are consistent and stable. When the composite reliability (CR) value is large, it means that the error of the test result is small, and when the resulting error is larger, the reliability will be smaller. Therefore, reliability can also be used to measure the degree to which the results are affected by errors. If the error is small, the same question items will be more consistent.

According to the research recommendations of Hatcher and Stepanski [84], the CR value should be above 0.7, while Fornell and Larcker [85] suggested that the CR value should be above 0.6 to indicate the reliability and consistency of the research questionnaire.

Cronbach's Alpha

According to Bagozzi and Yi [86] and Nunnally and Bernstein [87], Cronbach's α must be at least greater than 0.7 to be accepted, and for the items in this study to meet the internal consistency standard. Hair et al. [88] proposed that Cronbach's α should be greater than 0.7, and if it is less than 0.7, the question should be modified; if Cronbach's α is less than 0.35, it means that it is not reliable [87].

5.2.2. Validity Analysis
Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

The AVE value refers to the degree to which each question item can explain the average variation extraction. The higher the AVE value, the higher the correlation and consistency of the questions representing each construct, and the higher the reliability and convergent validity. Fornell and Larcker [85] proposed that the AVE value should be greater than 0.5.

5.2.3. Discriminant Validity

In order to identify individual differences, the discriminant validity of individual and single research constructs is measured to detect whether there is duplication among research constructs. Therefore, this study focused on the comparison of the degree of correlation between different constructs. According to the research of Fornell and Larcker [85], it was proposed that the AVE value of each construct should be greater than the square value of the correlation coefficient between constructs. In this study, SPSS 24 statistical software was used for data analysis, and the analysis results are shown in Tables 5 and 6 below. According to the results of this study, the CR value of each question item was greater than 0.7, and the Cronbach α of each question item was greater than 0.7, suggesting the research questions have high reliability. In addition, the AVE value of each question item was greater than 0.7.

Table 5. Discriminant validity.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Online Word-of-Mouth	**0.770** _					
2. Spokesman Credibility	0.518 ** _	**0.760** _				
3. Herd Behavior	0.507 ** _	0.437 ** _	**0.714** _			
4. Purchase Intention	0.421 ** _	0.680 ** _	0.434 ** _	**0.899** _		
5. Source Fit	0.384 ** _	0.700 ** _	0.275 ** _	0.513 ** _	**0.892** _	
6. Brand Attitude	0.477 ** _	0.789 ** _	0.436 ** _	0.787 ** _	0.651 ** _	**0.847** _

Note 1: The bold characters in the diagonal line are the root sign of the AVE value of each construct, and the rest of the values are the correlation coefficients. Note 2: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 6. Reliability and validity analysis.

Research Variables	Measurement Variable	Factor Loading	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Online Word-of-Mouth	OW1	0.77	0.705	0.841	0.853	0.594
	OW2	0.84	0.764			
	OW3	0.67	0.601			
	OW4	0.79	0.668			
Spokesman Credibility	SC1	0.83	0.780	0.913	0.915	0.578
	SC2	0.82	0.776			
	SC3	0.71	0.765			
	SC4	0.86	0.786			
	SC5	0.79	0.761			
	SC6	0.68	0.661			
	SC7	0.68	0.667			
	SC8	0.69	0.653			
Herd Behavior	CF1	0.66	0.595	0.804	0.806	0.511
	CF2	0.78	0.660			
	CF3	0.76	0.652			
	CF4	0.66	0.579			
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.87	0.815	0.923	0.926	0.809
	PI2	0.88	0.836			
	PI3	0.94	0.881			
Source Fit	FI1	0.86	0.835	0.950	0.951	0.796
	FI2	0.92	0.893			
	FI3	0.87	0.840			
	FI4	0.92	0.895			
	FI5	0.89	0.853			
Brand Attitude	BA1	0.81	0.784	0.952	0.953	0.718
	BA2	0.86	0.839			
	BA3	0.80	0.761			
	BA4	0.89	0.873			
	BA5	0.89	0.864			
	BA6	0.79	0.774			

5.2.4. Correlation

This study used the Pearson correlation coefficient to carry out the correlation between constructs. The larger the correlation coefficient, the higher the correlation. In practice, if the correlation coefficient is greater than 0.8, it means that the variables are highly correlated, but when the correlation coefficient is less than 0.2, it means that there is no correlation between variables. According to the suggestion of Hair et al. [88], the Pearson correlation coefficient should be less than 0.9, which can also prevent the occurrence of collinearity. Table 5 shows the discriminant validity. It can be seen that the correlation coefficients between the potential constructs have reached the statistical level of a 1% significant difference. In addition, the correlation coefficients in each construct are less

than 0.9, and the values are all less than the practical value of 0.8, indicating that there is no collinearity among the constructs, so the hypotheses proposed in this study have preliminary support.

5.2.5. Model Fit

In this study, the linear structural relationship model (SEM) was used to test the overall fitness of the model. Most of the fitness indicators must meet the judgment standards before the fitness of the model can be identified [88]. Bagozzi and Yi [86] proposed that the sample size should be considered first, then the chi-square test and the degree of freedom numerical detection model fit degree ten. Most of the suggestions indicate that the lower the result, the better, where the numbers at least needs to be lower than five, and it is better not to exceed three. And below two means the mode fit is quite good [89]. Browne and Cudeck's [88] point of view is that the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) and the adjusted coefficient of determination (adjusted goodness-of-fit index, AGFI) greater than 0.8 indicate a considerable degree of fitness. If the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) is less than 0.05, it indicates a high degree of fit, and if it is greater than 0.1, it is assumed that the model does not fit the data.

It can be seen from Table 7 that the chi-square test result of the model fit test is 819.72, and the degree of freedom ratio (chi-square/df) is 1.8. The GFI value is 0.787, and the AGFI value is 0.7, and both values are lower than the judgment standard of 0.8. Nevertheless, while working on SEM (Structural Equation Modeling), even though the values for GFI and AGFI do not exceed 0.8 but are close to 0.8, they still met the requirement suggested by Baumgartner and Homburg [90] and Doll et al. [91]. Also, because both GFI and AGFI are very sensitive to sample size and have a certain degree of downward bias, they have been decreasingly trusted as fit indices, even to the point where researchers have recommended disregarding them [92–94]. The RMSEA value is 0.0651, which is less than the judgment standard of 0.1, indicating that the theoretical model has a high degree of fit. The NFI value of the relative adaptation index is 0.965, the CFI value is 0.985, the RFI value is 0.962, and the IFI value is 0.986. All are greater than the suggestion of 0.9. The PGFI value of the simple effect index is 0.678, and the PNFI value is 0.885, both of which are greater than the criterion of 0.5. Summarizing the above discussion, the model fit indexes in this study have reached their respective standards, suggesting that the research test and the data have a good degree of fit and that the relationship between the questions and constructs in this research have a good explanation.

Table 7. Overall model fit results.

Fit Index	Judgment Standard	Value
Basic conditions		
Chi-square(df)		819.72
Chi-square/df	<3	1.80
absolute fit index		
GFI	>0.8	0.787
AGFI	>0.8	0.753
RMSEA	<0.1	0.0651
Relative fit indicator		
NFI	>0.9	0.965
CFI	>0.9	0.985
RFI	>0.9	0.962
IFI	>0.9	0.986
Simple and effective adaptation index		
PGFI	>0.5	0.678
PNFI	>0.5	0.885

5.3. Path Analysis

This study used LISREL 10.3 software to test the hypotheses proposed in this study. The analysis of Hypothesis 1 to Hypothesis 6 was carried out using the 203 valid sample respondents in this study. Table 8 shows the results show that except for H5 (Source Fit → Brand attitude, β = 0.06, t = 0.91), the research hypotheses were all significant.

Table 8. Results of research hypothesis testing.

	Path	Standardized Estimate (β)	t Value	Supported
H1	Online Word-of-Mouth → Herd Behavior	0.50	4.56	Supported
H2	Spokesman Credibility → Herd Behavior	0.25	2.72	Supported
H3	Herd Behavior → Purchase Intention	0.19	2.61	Supported
H4	Spokesman Credibility → Brand attitude	0.77	8.45	Supported
H5	Source Fit → Brand Attitude	0.06	0.91	Not Supported
H6	Brand Attitude → Purchase Intention	0.98	10.18	Supported

5.4. Mediating Effect Analysis

In this study, the mediating effect was tested by module 4 of the SPSS PROCESS designed by Hayes [95]. In addition, the 95% confidence interval estimate and the 5000 repeated sampling (bootstrap) estimate were used as proposed by Hayes [95]. If a 95% confidence interval is used and the results do not include zero, there is a mediation effect. Table 9 shows the results of the mediating effect test. The mediating effects of the three paths reached a significant level, which means that online word-of-mouth and spokesman credibility indirectly affect purchase intentions through herd behavior. The credibility of the spokesman also has an indirect impact on the brand attitude.

Table 9. Mediating effect test results.

	Path						Effect	LLCI	ULCI
1	OW	→	CF	→	PI		0.1718	0.0779	0.2790
2	SC	→	CF	→	PI		0.0917	0.0298	0.1706
3	SC	→	BA	→	PI		0.6516	0.4638	0.8753

6. Research Results and Discussions

Section 6 summarizes the results of this study and puts forward research discussions. First, the results of this study are explained and compared with previous studies, and finally, the research discussions are presented.

6.1. Results

6.1.1. The Impact of Online Word-of-Mouth on Herd Behavior

The results of this study show that online word-of-mouth has a significantly positive impact on herd behavior. This result agrees with Bickart and Schindler [17]. Bickart and Schindler [17] stated in their research that when the credibility of online word-of-mouth is higher, it will indirectly affect consumers' attitudes and behaviors. Let consumers search for relevant information on the Internet before purchasing a product or service. At this time, the online word-of-mouth that a consumer reads is large and credible, which will affect consumers' attitude of wanting to follow others.

6.1.2. The Impact of Spokesman Credibility on Herd Behavior

The results of this study show that spokesman credibility has a significantly positive impact on herd behavior. This result is consistent with the statement made by Asch [40].

Consumers will use other people's information as a criterion for evaluating products, especially when consumers themselves do not have sufficient information, they will listen to the decisions of others, which will also make consumers feel more at ease, and because of this, it is more likely that consumers will listen to others opinions. Ohanian [28] believes that whether a spokesman is an expert or not, as long as it is worthy of being trusted by consumers, it will be persuasive.

6.1.3. The Impact of Herd Behavior on Purchase Intention

The results of this study show that herd behavior has a significantly positive impact on purchase intention. This result is consistent with Deutsch and Gerard's [51] claim that consumers are most often influenced by normative or informative social influences in implementing purchasing decisions. Before buying a product or service, consumers will observe whether the product will be accepted by society. When the product or service is accepted by society, consumers will increase their willingness to purchase.

6.1.4. The Impact of Spokesman Credibility on Brand Attitude

The results of this study show that spokesman credibility has a significantly positive impact on brand attitude. The results of this study are consistent with the statement put forward by Sallam and Wahid [60], i.e., when consumers have positive thoughts and a highly credible product spokesman, consumers will also have positive thoughts and attitudes towards the brand.

6.1.5. The Impact of Source Fit on Brand Attitude

The results of this study show that source fit (the degree of fit between the spokesman and the product and brand) has no significant impact on brand attitude. The degree of source fit in this study had no significant impact on brand attitudes, and this may be because the respondents of this study did not have a special impression or feeling of Mr. Guocheng Zeng, the spokesman example in the questionnaire of this study. In total, 57% of the respondents in this study were in the age group of 15–24 years old, and people in this age group are not likely to have a special impression or idea of Mr. Guocheng Zeng, which leads to this non-significant hypothesis.

6.1.6. The Impact of Brand Attitude on Purchase Intention

The results of this study show that brand attitudes can significantly increase purchase intention. The results of this study are in agreement with Goldsmith et al. [72]. Their proposed statement is consistent with the fact that when consumers have a positive emotional response to a brand's attitude, the emotional response will make the consumer have a positive purchase intention for the product and service. That is to say, when consumers have positive thoughts and feelings about the brand's attitude, the consumers' willingness to purchase the product will also increase.

6.2. Discussions

The purpose of this research was to investigate and analyze, through empirical research, how to influence consumers' purchase intention through online word-of-mouth, spokesman credibility, source fit (the degree of fit between the spokesman and the product and brand), herd behavior, and brand attitude. In this era of advanced technology and fast delivery of information, in order to attract the attention of consumers, the use of product spokesmen is a common marketing tactic. However, not every spokesman is suitable to endorse every product, and this research provides direction and advice to companies that are marketing products and services through spokesmen according to the research results.

Previous studies on spokesman endorsements indicate that the source fit (spokesman-product congruence) has positive impacts on consumer attitudes toward the advertising brand and product, as well as purchase intention [43,65]. However, most studies were conducted within the traditional mass media context. There is very little research examining

the new types of online spokesmen. The results of this study show that source fit has no significant impact on brand attitude over the Internet. The present study offers further insights regarding the reverse effects of source fit on brand attitude, which should be examined by more researchers and practitioners.

According to the results of this study, online word-of-mouth and spokesman credibility have a significantly positive impact on herd behavior, and herd behavior also has a significantly positive impact on purchase intention. In addition, herd behavior and brand attitudes also significantly increase purchase intention. Therefore, consumers can indirectly be influenced by herd behavior through online word-of-mouth and the credibility of the spokesman, and then increase their purchase intentions.

According to the results of this study, if companies want to make consumers have the willingness to buy products, they need to pay attention to the comments and feelings about the product on the Internet. If the online reviews are mostly positive, it will make consumers think that the product is popular and buy it together. And companies also need to take the credibility of the spokesman into consideration. Contemporary spokesmen are seen as popular, attractive, and trustworthy by consumers [96], which will affect the consumers' decision to follow the public's behavior. In addition, the credibility of the spokesman will also affect the consumer's perception of the brand's attitude towards the brand. When consumers' attitude towards the brand is positive or improved, consumers' willingness to buy the product will also increase accordingly.

7. Research Limitations and Future Research

From the managerial perspective, this study has pointed out that marketing and business managers should utilize spokesmen to gauge consumer behavior by focusing on the impact of spokesman credibility, source fit, herd behavior, brand attitude, and online word-of-mouth on purchase intention to obtain better consumer insights. Nonetheless, the present research has a few limitations. Firstly, future studies may consider a new research model to include other factors. Secondly, in recent years, many celebrities have started their own businesses and become their own bosses. Mr. Guocheng Zeng can be said to be the first person to develop this model. In 2015, Zeng Bian Mian by Mr. Guocheng Zeng, which was popular in Taiwan, brought a wave of celebrity artists' entrepreneurship. In related research in the future, the effect of the product spokesman and the product founder could be compared as the spokesman. Thirdly, in this research questionnaire, 57% of the respondents were from 15 to 24 years old, 27% from 25 to 34 years old, and 13% from 35 to 44 years old. However, since the spokesman of this research example mainly attracts middle-aged and elderly people, subsequent research could collect more samples of middle-aged and elderly people. Finally, future studies might consider the specific spokesman in different countries, areas, and cultures to reveal the impact of spokesman credibility, source fit (the degree of fit between the spokesman and the product and brand), herd behavior, brand attitude, and online word-of-mouth on consumer buying behavior. The example taken in this research was Zeng Bian Mian by Mr. Guocheng Zeng, which belongs to the category of daily necessities. Future research could give two examples, where one product is a lower-priced daily necessity, and the other is a higher-priced luxury product. The results of the two studies may be more precise than just one lower-priced necessity.

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