

# The Effect of Celebrity Firms on Customer Commitment in E-Commerce Setting: the Mediating Roles of Trust and Identification.

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## Abstract

This study intends to investigate the mediating effects of trust and identification on the impact of celebrity firm on customer commitment in an e-commerce context. Two hundred and forty three (243) useable questionnaires out of 450 were used to collect data for the study from respondents who shop on any of the platforms on Alibaba.com in China. SEM was used to analyse the data with support of SmartPls3 software. The finding shows that the relationship between celebrity firm and commitment is significant. Again, the relationships between celebrity firm and the two mediators (trust and identification) are significant, whereas the relationships between the two mediators (trust and identification) with commitment are also significant. The highlight of the research is the direct and significant relationship celebrity firm as a “social approval asset” have on customer commitment. This, therefore, shows that apart from the individual celebrities influence on customers of firms in making choices, celebrity firms also influence customers’ commitment towards their products or services.

**Keywords:** Celebrity firm, Trust, Identification, Commitment, Structural equation modelling

**Paper type:** Research paper

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## 1.Introduction

Marketing scholars have written much about individual celebrities and how they impact on firms in their efforts to achieve their marketing targets. Some scholars even went further to write about celebrity endorsement (Chan et al, 2013; Austin, Vord, Pinkleton and Epstein, 2008), celebrity worship (Maltby et al., 2004; McCutcheon et al., 2003; McCutcheon, Lange and Houran, 2002) , and celebrity influence (Wen, 2017; Chan and Zhang,2007; Fraser and Brown,2002). These celebrities attract attention and generate interest because of their status (Rein, Kotler, and Stoller, 1987:15).

After the turn of the millennium, there have been a paradigm shift in the theory of celebrity, and this is geared towards firm celebrity. The theory has been narrowed down to embrace firms as celebrities (Rindova, Pollock and Hayward, 2006). These firms enjoy some levels of public attention and excitement (Rindova et al., 2006). The catalyst celebrity status these firms enjoy are as a result of positive emotional responses and large scale public attention (Rindova et al.,2006) and these generate public trust and identification towards the firms and ultimately leads to commitment to the firms.

According to Rindova et al. (2006), for firms to get involved in creating celebrity status, they take non-conforming actions by managing public impressions about themselves in advance. Researchers have studied the role of the media in making a firm to have celebrity status, by focusing on the “norm-breaking nature of firm celebrities” (Kjaergaard et al., 2011; Pfarrer et al. 2010; Rindova et al. 2007; Rindova et al. 2006; Pollock and Rindove,2003; Deephouse,2000; Rindova,1997).

The media, for example, plays a significant role in the creation of narratives that brings about success to an organization because of what the celebrity CEO is capable of doing. Moreover, Rindova et al. (2006), suggested that the rapid growth of ICT plays a significant role in the spread of celebrity. The media’s role in telling dramatic narratives regarding firms that are hoping for celebrity status is highlighted because the media provides the avenue for debate, where firms are evaluated which consequently impact on their reputations (Deephouse 2000). However,

the mass media's assessment and how they contribute to inciting the perceptions of stakeholders' of firms have undergone some changes and also be updated by virtue of the rise in social media usage (Bria, 2013).

In the context of individual celebrities, scholars have posited that celebrity identification impacts on the followers' beliefs make them to bond and agree with what the celebrity churn out via many sociocultural premises (Brown and De Matviuk, 2010; Brown et al., 2003). From this backdrop, we, therefore, argue that customers' identification with firms in the e-commerce context will affect their values and beliefs as a result of the celebrity status of the firms.

Moreover, in e-commerce context, for business relationship to thrive between firms and their public, trust is a significant factor (Gambetta, 1988; Dasgupta, 1988; Moorman et al, 1992; Ganesan, 1994; Gulati, 1995, Luan & Lin, 2003), especially regarding the quality of their products and services and also engaging in interaction with an e-vendor because of the risk elements involved (Gefen et al., 2003; Luan & Lin, 2003). As a result of the PER and the LSPA the e-commerce firms receive, trust is therefore established in the process which then leads to commitment. When trust is established between firms and their customers, commitment inevitably follows.

In this study, we, therefore, narrowed the theory of celebrity to the level of a firm (Bria, 2013; Kjærgaard et al., 2011; Rindova et al., 2006). To investigate how celebrity firms influence customer commitment in an e-commerce context through the mediation effect of trust and identification, we use Alibaba group as the celebrity firm since it is the fourth most admired company in China and the number one most admired company in the e-commerce sector (China daily, 2018)

The neglect of a celebrity firm and the significant impact it has on customer commitment in an e-commerce context as a social approval asset have made the dynamics of the celebrity firm's effect on its public murky, hence the gap to be filled. This study will add to the investigation into the way celebrity firms as "social approval assets" impact on their customers' commitment.

## **2. Literature review and development of hypotheses**

### **2.1 *Celebrity firms***

Celebrity firms are firms that benefit from their public as a result of PER and LSPA from their stakeholders which as a result turns into "social approval assets" for the firm (Pollock et al., 2016; Pfarrer et al., 2010). It is very significant for one to note that both PER and LSPA from the firm's publics are vital in the formation of firm celebrity status (Rindova et al., 2016).

The rationale for the existence of any profit-making firms is to make profit, and to achieve this the stakeholders ought to be attached to the firm. Otherwise, the lack of positive attention and emotional feedback could go a long way to impact negatively on its profit (Rindova et al., 2016). To get the stakeholders to have any positive emotional attachment to the firm to help in profit-making, the stakeholders have to be loyal to the firm through attitude and behaviour (Oliver, 1999 & Zeithaml, 2000).

To create a celebrity firm, the media's role cannot be overlooked (Rindova et al., 2006) since they are in charge of the materials that help to spread information and its content about firms to stakeholders (Rindova et al., 2006). Irrespective of the fact that researchers in the field of organization have pointed out how the media gets the public informed about events (Deephouse, 2000; Chen and Meindl, 1991), which consequently impacts on opinions of stakeholders about firms (Pollock and Rindova, 2003; Lounsbury and Glyan, 2001; Deephouse, 2000; Abrahamson and Fombrun, 1994), the ways by which the media, tackles these tasks have received very little attention (Deephouse, 2000; Pollock and Rindova, 2003).

Looking at trust as a construct in mediating between celebrity firm and commitment, it is important for one to notice trust as a concept tends to exist at the individual level or the level of the firm (Moorman, Zaltman and Deshpande, 1993). Moreover, though trust is seen as a TAM dimension, it could also be looked at as a catalyst in inducing willingness of a user to participate in the exchange of money online and also information that is personal and sensitive (Wang et al., 2003). Spekman (1988) posits trust as a strategic partnership corner stone, so in this instance, the public would like to align themselves to e-commerce firms that are trustworthy as a result of

the celebrity status they have. Again, in the literature of commitment trust relationship, trust is seen as something that exists when a partner has integrity and is reliable (Kassim & Abdullah, 2010; Ranaweera and Prabhu, 2003 Morgan & Hunt, 1994). We, therefore posit similar to Morgan and Hunt (1994) and Achrol (1991), that trust is a key factor in relationship commitment.

More so, the media merges the actions of the firms with detailed information, the cultures, leaderships and identities of the firms with a positive affective quality (Zajonc, 1980) that satisfies stakeholders' need for identification, gossip, status, fantasy, attachment status, and affiliation (Rindova et al., 2006,51). These actions by the media do have impacts on how customers identify with the firm.

Regarding the concept of commitment in organizations and social exchange, Morgan and Hunt (1994) defined relationship commitment as "an exchange whereby a partner believes that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it." Therefore, the party that shows commitment believes in working on the relationship to ensure that it stays forever. This definition nonetheless is similar to that of Moorman et al (1992, p. 316), which stated that "commitment to the relationship is seen as an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship." We therefore, argue that as a result of the relationship the e-commerce firm has with its public which is created by the narratives of the media (Rindova et al.,2006), the celebrity status the e-commerce firms enjoy will bring about commitment. This is because, in the literature of organizational and buyer behaviour, commitment is very crucial (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). From the backdrop of this, we propose that the trust the public have in the celebrity firm and also identifying with the firm; will lead to commitment. We, therefore, formulate the following hypotheses

H1: Celebrity firm positively influences trust

H2: Celebrity firm has a positive relationship with identification

H3: Celebrity firm instigates commitment

## **2.2 Identification and Commitment**

Social identification theory is rooted in the social psychology theory (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Social identification refers to the situation whereby an individual identifies her/himself as belonging to a society (Kim et al., 2001). An individual identifying her/himself with a firm is addressed as a special kind of social identification (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Bhattacharya et al., 1995; Lau, 1989). From the backdrop of this, it can be deduced that consumers' identification with a particular firm make them differentiate the firm from others (Kim et al., 2001).

Moreover, although the social identification theory is usually used in organizational identification (Kim et al., 2001), it has also been applied to celebrity identification whereby a person adopts another person's attitude to establish a relationship through psychological ways (Kelman, 1958). Nonetheless, researchers are of the notion that celebrity identification impacts the followers' behaviour, beliefs, and values, and these make them support whatever the celebrity says via many socio-cultural premises (Brown and de Matviuk, 2010; Brown et al., 2003). We, therefore, propose that customers' identification with a celebrity firm which is created by virtue of the fabricated narratives by the mass media (Rindova et al., 2006), in an e-commerce setting could lead to customers' commitment to the firm.

H4: Identification with the celebrity firm affects commitment

## **2.3 Trust and Commitment**

Trust as a construct is seen as one of the most significant factors when establishing value-laden relationships. Scholars had posited that, vital trust is establishing and retaining long-term relationship (Singh and Sirdeshmukh, 2000). Many scholars have postulated that customers who shop online usually do not buy from e-vendors whom they lack trust for (Reichheld and Schefter, 2000; Jarvenpaa and Tractinsky, 1999). The relationship built as a result of trust could lead to customer loyalty. Morgan and Hunt (1994) posited that loyalty and commitment are impacted positively as a result of trust, which ultimately brings about two- way relationships which are valuable. According to (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001), loyalty typifies the way of maintaining a value laden relationship which has been created by trust. We, therefore, formulated this hypothesis:

H5: Trust leads to commitment

### 3. Methodology

This section of the study contains a discussion on how data was collected as well as sampling techniques. Moreover, it also entails how the constructs were measured and the description of the methods employed to analyse the data.

#### 3.1 Sampling and procedures

To collect the data, we used the convenience sampling technique. China was chosen for this study because it is the hub of e-commerce in Asia and. According to Rindova et al., (2006; 18), to study celebrity firm empirically, the Harris Interactive Reputation Quotient (RQ) survey can be used. Because, it makes available to researchers the prospect to ascertain how celebrity and reputation relate since it clearly measures the “emotional appeal” of a firm (Rindova et al., 2006; 18). Alibaba was chosen because per fortune China released ranking of China’s most admired companies for 2018, Alibaba group was ranked as the number four (4). Though it is the fourth ranked in the list, it is the only e-commerce firm among the first four (Chinadaily,2018)

The sample was made up of respondents whose educational qualification was either below high school to doctorate holders who shop on “Taobao” a popular e-commerce platform on Alibaba.com. The respondents have different demographic backgrounds about gender, age, education, income level, and their e-commerce usage rate. Both paper and pencil, and online questionnaires through WeChat were administered for the survey. We used these approaches because, the combination of an online survey and that of a paper and pencil can boost the rate of response significantly (Chang et al., 2012; Wen, 2017). In all, 243 questionnaires were useable out of 450 sampled respondents. These were obtained in the course of eight-weeks from February to April 2019.

#### 3.2 Measurement

To measure celebrity firm, trust, identification, and commitment, a structured questionnaire made up of 25 Likert scale items were adapted from previous studies and modified to meet the requirement of this study. To measure commitment, three related items were adapted from Pritchard et al (1999), constructs for identification had (six) related items which were adapted from Celebrity-Persona Identification Scale (Bocarnea and Brown, 2007), and whereas celebrity firm (eight items) four of which are under large scale public attention and the other four dealing with positive emotional response which were suggested by Rindova et al (2006) as the dimensions to measure celebrity firm. To measure trust, (four) items were adapted from Gefen et al (2009) and another (four) from Ribbink et al. (2004). Five-point Likert scale starting from [1] strongly disagree to [5] strongly agree was used.

#### 3.3 Technique for Data Analysis

Structural equation model was employed to analyse the data with support from SmartPls3 (Ringle et al., 2015). Anderson and Gerbing (1988) two-step approach was also used in the study. We then examined the measurement before evaluating the structural model. We performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to establish the construct validity of the measurement model. The next step was to evaluate the structural model to test the hypothesis and model fit after ascertaining the construct validity.

#### 4. Analysis and results

This part of the study deals with data analysis, interpretation of results, and findings of the study.

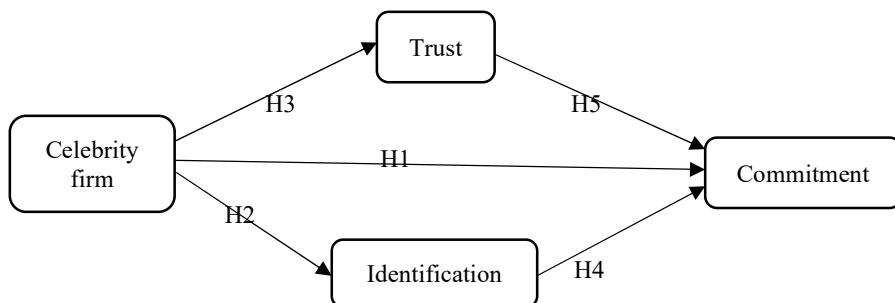


Fig 1. Conceptual framework.

Table 1. Measurement of constructs

Constructs	Items	Cronbach $\alpha$
Celebrity firm		0.738
CF1	Impact of a positive story about the firm created by the media brings large scale public attention towards the firm.*	
CF2	The customer sensitivity of the firm makes me feel good about it.*	
CF3	I can easily recognize the logo of the firm.*	
CF4	I am familiar with the firm as a brand.*	
CF5	The corporate social responsibility program by the firm makes me admire it.	
CF6	The reputation of the firm makes me trust it.	
CF7	I will be emotionally disturbed when any scandal befalls my favorite online firm.	
CF8	The name of the firm is easy to remember*	
Trust		

TR 1	“Based on my experience with the e-service in the past, I know it is predictable*”	0.721
TR 2	“I am prepared to give private information to the e-commerce firm”.	
TR 3	“The e-commerce firm always fulfils its promise.”	
TR 4	“It is not a problem to pay in advance for purchase products over the internet.”*	
TR 5	“E-commerce firms are professionals*”	
TR 6	“Based on my experience with the e-commerce in the past, I know it cares about consumers.*”	
TR 7	“Based on my experience with e-commerce firm in the past, I know it is honest.”	
TR 8	“Based on my experience with e-commerce firm in the past, I know it is not opportunistic.”	
Commitment		0.772
COMM1	“My preference for this e-commerce firm would not willingly change.”	
COMM2	“ would be difficult to change my beliefs about this e-commerce firm”	
COMM3	“To change my preference from this e-commerce firm would require major rethinking.”	
Identification		0.705
IDEN 1	The quality of the firm’s services makes me identify with it	
IDEN 2	Base on the identification I have with the firm, I have developed a positive emotion towards it.	
IDEN 3	I will celebrate the e-commerce firm because I identify with it.	

IDEN 4	I remain committed with the firm as a result of the identification I have with it.	
IDEN 5	The reputation of the firm makes me identify with it	
IDEN 6	I can easily recognize/identify the logo of the firm	

Items with an asterisk were removed because they were loading below 0.6

#### 4.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 2 below contains the demographic characteristics of the respondents, which portrays varieties about education, age, gender, frequency of online shopping and income level. The age of the respondents was from 18 to 30 and above. Most of the respondents (34.2 percent) were found to be between ages 21 and 23. It is important to note that female respondents accounted for 66.3 percent of the total sample. In totality, 51.2 % of the respondents are bachelor's degree holders, 24 % are master's degree holders, whereas 0.8 percent is below high school. Respondents with the highest monthly income were 0.8 percent, and those with the lowest monthly income was 67.5 percent. Lastly, 31.3 percent of the respondent stated they always shop online; while 37 indicated they sometimes shop online.

Table 2. Demographic profiles

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	%	Cumulative (%)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	82	33.7	33.7
Female	161	66.3	100
<b>Age</b>			
18-20	38	15.6	15.6
21-23	83	34.2	49.8
24-26	40	16.5	66.3
27-29	35	14.4	80.7
30 and above	47	19.3	100
<b>Education</b>			

Below High School	2	0.8	0.8
High School	32	13.2	14
Bachelor's Degree	124	51.2	65
Master's Degree	59	24	89.3
Doctorate	26	10.7	100
<b>Income Level</b>			
2,500 or less Yuan	164	67.5	67.5
2,501-5,000 Yuan	55	22.6	90.1
5,001-10,000 Yuan	15	6.2	96.3
10,001-20,000 Yuan	7	2.9	99.2
20,001 or more Yuan	2	0.8	100
<b>Frequency of Shopping Online</b>			
Sometimes	90	37	37
Not Sure	6	2.5	39.5
Very Often	71	29.2	68.7
Always	76	31.3	100

#### 4.2 The measurement model results

To ascertain how fit the measurement model is, we used the unidimensionality technique, confirmed the reliability of items, internal consistency, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio.

**4.2.1 Unidimensionality technique:** In order to achieve the acceptable factor loadings for the constructs, items whose factor loadings were below 0.60 were therefore deleted as posited by Awang (2010).

#### 4.2.2 Items reliability

The confirmatory factor analysis results depicted in Table 3 show that the items loaded significantly and above the acceptable level of 0.60 as posited by Chin et al., (1997). Further, the internal reliability results was from 0.705 to



0.772, which are above 0.70 cut-off level posted by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Also, composite reliability values ranged from 0.818 to 0.868, which are above 0.70 thresholds as posited by Hair et al., (2010).

#### 4.2.3 Content validity

Figure 2 establishes the content validity since all the items loaded very high as posited by (Hair et al., 2010; Chin, 1998). This depicts all loaded items are satisfactory.

#### 4.2.4 Convergent validity

In SEM, convergent validity is considered as a level where set of indicators are brought together in evaluating the concept under consideration (Hair et al., 2010; Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). Nevertheless, the AVE extracted portrayed the entire variance shared, which measured a specific construct that ranged from 0.531 to 0.688, surpassing the accepted level of 0.50 posited by Hair et al., (2010) and Bagozzi and Yi (1988). Nevertheless, the composite reliability of the latent constructs was at least 0.818 and smallest AVE of 0.531.

This then makes it obvious that the convergent validity in the measurement model is adequate, and by this, it can be ascertained that the latent variables clarified more than half of its variance.

Table 3. Latent Constructs Validity and Reliability

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Internal reliability	Convergent validity Composite reliability	AVE <sup>b</sup>
Celebrity firm			0.738	0.852	0.657
	CF5	0.789			
	CF6	0.847			
	CF7	0.794			
Commitment			0.772	0.868	0.688
	COMM1	0.867			
	COMM2	0.821			
	COMM3	0.798			
Identification			0.705	0.818	0.531
	IDEN2	0.711			
	IDEN3	0.820			
	IDEN4	0.698			
	IDEN6	0.678			
Trust					

	TR2	0.699	0.721	0.826	0.543
	TR3	0.798			
	TR7	0.720			
	TR8	0.703			

#### 4.2.5 Discriminant validity

To ascertain the discriminant validity, Fornell-Larcker criterion was used. Table 4 below indicates the square root of the AVE's, above the projected correlation values. This shows that there are no issues of discriminant validity in the conceptual model (Hair et al., 2017; Farooq et al., 2016);

Table 4. Discriminant validity

Latent constructs	1	2	3	4
1. CF	<b>0.810</b>			
2. COMM	0.477	<b>0.829</b>		
3. IDEN	0.489	0.551	<b>0.729</b>	
4. TR	0.453	0.476	0.560	<b>0.737</b>

The bold values represent the Square roots of the AVE's

Table 5. HTMT

Latent constructs	1	2	3	4
1. CF				
2. COMM	0.630			
3. IDEN	0.671	0.734		
4. TR	0.609	0.631	0.780	

Nonetheless, as a modern method when examining the discriminant validity of variables, we, therefore, calculated the correlations ratio of HTMT (Henseler et al., 2015). Value of HTMT above 0.85 depicts a likely problem of

discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017). According to the rule of thumb, values of HTMT for this study in table 5 below were all below the 0.85 acceptable level. This, therefore, indicates that the discriminant validity has no problem.

## 5. Model Fit

Since there is no one specific benchmark in evaluating a model for PLS-SEM analysis (Henseler et al., 2009), Tenenhaus et al. (2004) suggested a universal criterion of goodness-of-fit ( $0 < \text{GoF} < 1$ ). The PLS-SEM's overall measure for model fit has its defects since it does not make available the overall Goodness of Fit. Nonetheless, Henseler et al. (2016) posited the value of  $R^2$  to be used to check the exploratory strength of a model. The diagnostic tool postulated by Tenenhaus et al. (2005) as the Goodness of Fit index was used to establish how fit the model is. These thresholds were posited by Wetzels et al. (2009) to establish the analysis of the GoF; where 0.1=small, 0.25=medium and 0.36= large. With 0.498 as the value of GoF index, it is then establish that the model has a good fit.

Table 6. Goodness of Fit

Constructs	AVE	$R^2$
Celebrity firm	0.657	
Commitment	0.688	0.382
Identification	0.531	0.239
Trust	0.543	0.205
Average scores	0.604	0.413
$AVE \times R^2$	0.249	
$\text{GoF} = \sqrt{AVE \times R^2}$	0.498	

Again, the SRMR which paves way for measuring the inconsistencies which manifest between expected and observed correlation as an outright measure of the model fit on the average, is used to assess how to fit the research model is.

Hu and Bentler (1999) suggested that a value below 0.10 or of 0.08 are regarded as a good fit. In this study, the SRMR is 0.080, which is less than the threshold of 0.10 suggested by Hu and Bentler (1998). SRMR is used to correct the misspecification of the model as a measure of PLS-SEM goodness of fit (Henseler et al., 2014), whereas the Normed Fit Index (NFI) of the model is 0.709, which is closer to 0.9, as postulated by Bentler and Bonett (1980). From the above, it shows that the goodness of fit is satisfactory.

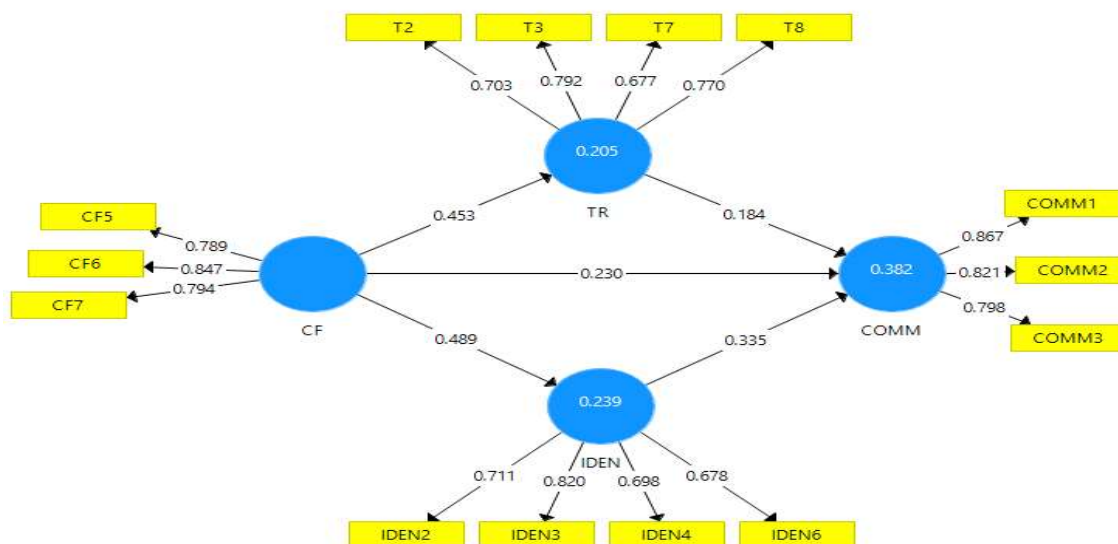


Figure 2. Structural model

## 6. Discussion of results

The results reported in Table 7 below show the following: the effect of celebrity firm on commitment is significant with these values ( $\beta = 0.230$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 3.113$ ,  $p < 0.002$ ). This, therefore, indicates that celebrity firm has a direct positive impact on commitment. Again, the impact of celebrity firm on identification is very significant, showing these values ( $\beta = 0.489$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 9.179$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). H1 and H2 are therefore supported. Moreover, celebrity firm has a significant influence on trust ( $\beta = 0.453$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 9.110$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ), H3 is therefore supported. Again, identification as a mediator also has a significant impact on commitment ( $\beta = 0.335$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 3.365$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), whereas, trust also has a positive minimal impact on commitment respectively ( $\beta = 0.184$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 2.282$ ,  $p < 0.023$ ). Hence, hypothesis H4 and H5 are supported. These depict that, H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 were all supported as posited in this research.

Table 7. Summary of hypotheses results

Hypotheses	Path coefficients	t-value	p-value	Results
H1CF -> COMM	0.230*	3.113	0.002	Accepted
H2 CF -> IDEN	0.489***	9.179	0.000	Supported
H3 CF -> TR	0.453***	9.110	0.000	Supported
H4 IDEN -> COMM	0.335**	3.365	0.001	Supported
H5 TR -> COMM	0.184*	2.282	0.023	Accepted

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

## 7. Theoretical and Managerial implications

### 7.1 Theoretical implications

This study's main objective is to examine the relationship between the concept of celebrity influence and customer commitment at the firm level. This study conceptually adds to the literature in many ways. First of all, by examining the implications for customer commitment, it brings about greater understanding of the celebrity firm concept. This is significant in relation to results of a firm. This is because, it impacts directly in an effort to retain profitability and customers' commitment.

Secondly, from the findings, there is a corroboration between celebrity firm and trust, and identification respectively. These findings are new in the literature because there are no hypotheses similar to these.

In summation, this study significantly fills the lacuna in the literature pertaining to celebrity firm's impact on customer commitment. This study depicts the role celebrity firms play in understanding customer's commitment as a result of trust and identification in e-commerce context.

### 7.2 Managerial implications

findings of this research suggest e-commerce firms should establish a good rapport with their online customers by providing them with quality service and physical products. This can be done by creating a trusted environment for the customer, since trust is significant in numerous business relationships (Moonman et al, 1992; Kumar et al, 1995; Gulati, 1995; Fukuyama, 1995) and most importantly to those doing business with e-commerce firms (Gefen et al., 2003; Reichheld and Scheffer, 2000). This can be achieved by giving them the exact things they shopped for from the online platform.

Again, the findings suggest that in order to win customers commitment, it should be of significant importance to enhance the image of the firm through reputation building, corporate social responsibility programme, and also the firm ought to be predictable, which will lead to identification. Moreover, the direct relationship between celebrity firm and customer commitment suggests that firms in the e-commerce sector can win the commitment of the customers by taking advantage of their corporate image, which is as a result of LSPA and PER from their stakeholders (Rindova et al., 2006).

## Limitations

No research is devoid of limitations, and therefore, this study is no exception. First, the geographical location where the research was carried out does not represent the entire country, since China is a big country in terms of land size and population. Secondly, the convenience sampling technique used made it a challenge to get a complete matched profile of the respondents in China because of its non-random nature.

## Conclusion and direction for future research

The highlight of this study is the direct and significant relationship between celebrity firm and customer commitment in e-commerce context. The results of the study show that celebrity firms in e-commerce settings influence customer trust and identification. Again, both trust and identification mediate celebrity firms and commitment, though the impact of trust on commitment is minimal.

Since this study is regarded as the first effort to investigate the impact of celebrity firm on commitment in e-commerce setting, directions for future research cannot be overlooked. A study of the moderating role of the media between celebrity firms and customer commitment could also be investigated.

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## Appendix. Measurement scales

### **Celebrity Firm**

1. I can easily recognize the logo of the firm.
2. The name of the firm is easy to remember.
3. Narratives about the firm created by the media brings awareness to the firm.
4. I am familiar with the firm as a brand.
5. I will be emotionally disturbed if any scandal befalls my favourite celebrity firm.
6. The corporate social responsibility programme of the firm makes me admire it
7. The reputation of the firm makes me trust it.
8. The customer sensitivity of the firm makes me feel good about it.

### **7. Trust**

1. Based on my experience with the e-commerce in the past, I know it is not opportunistic.
2. Based on my experience with the e-commerce in the past, I know it cares about consumers.
3. Based on my experience with the e-service in the past, I know it is honest.
4. Based on my experience with the e-service in the past, I know it is predictable.
5. I am prepared to give private information to the e-commerce firm.
6. It is not a problem to pay in advance for purchase products over the internet.
7. E-commerce firms are professionals.
8. E-commerce firms always fulfil their promises.

### **Identification**

1. The quality of the firm's services makes me identify with it
2. Base on the identification I have with the firm, I have developed a positive emotion towards it
3. I will celebrate the e-commerce firm because I identify with it.
4. I remain committed with the firm as a result of the identification I have with it.
5. The reputation of the firm makes me identify with it
6. I can easily recognise the logo of the firm

### **Commitment**

1. My preference for this e-commerce firm would not willingly change
2. It would be difficult to change my beliefs about this e-commerce firm
3. To change my preference from this e-commerce firm would require major rethinking