

FROM COMMUNICATION TO VALUE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED PRICE VALUE IN LOCAL PERFUME PURCHASE DECISIONS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study explains how celebrity endorsement and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) influence local perfume purchase decisions through perceived price value. **Method:** The analysis uses 119 complete survey responses. Standardized mediation paths are estimated with HC3 robust inference, while 5,000 bootstrap samples evaluate the indirect effects.

Finding: Celebrity endorsement ($\beta = 0.245$, $p = 0.007$) and e-WOM ($\beta = 0.607$, $p < 0.001$) positively predict perceived price value. Perceived price value predicts purchase decision ($\beta = 0.743$, $p < 0.001$). The indirect effects are significant for endorsement ($\beta = 0.182$; 95% CI = 0.054–0.319) and e-WOM ($\beta = 0.456$; 95% CI = 0.282–0.678), whereas their direct effects become nonsignificant.

Novelty: The study develops the promotional model by repositioning price evaluation as a psychological value mechanism rather than a parallel predictor. The findings show that communication affects purchasing mainly when it strengthens consumers' value-for-money judgment in an uncertain sensory-product setting.

INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing exposes consumers to several signals before they buy a fragrance. Celebrity or influencer content creates attention and symbolic meaning, while online reviews provide descriptions based on user experience. Consumers also evaluate whether the price is reasonable for the quality and benefits expected. These signals are especially important for perfume because aroma, projection, and longevity cannot be fully assessed through a screen.

Recent endorsement research highlights credibility, identification, endorser–brand congruence, and parasocial relationships as important drivers of consumer responses (El Hedhli et al., 2021; Rai et al., 2021; Bi & Zhang, 2022; Wahab et al., 2022). However, endorsement may shape early-stage impressions and expected value rather than directly produce a final purchasing decision.

Recent e-WOM research explains that consumers adopt online information when they consider it credible and useful. Reviews can reduce uncertainty by describing product performance and comparing the offer with alternatives. Meta-analytic and empirical evidence published during the last five years confirms that e-WOM affects purchase-related outcomes, although its influence varies across platforms, information characteristics, and products (Albayrak & Ceylan, 2021; Ismagilova et al., 2021; Verma et al., 2023; Ngo et al., 2024).

The previous direct-effects article treated perceived price as a parallel predictor and found it to be the only significant variable. That result suggests a different theoretical possibility: communication may influence purchase decisions by first changing value-for-money judgments. Positive reviews can reassure consumers that performance justifies the price, while a credible celebrity can strengthen the brand image used to interpret quality.

This study develops the model by repositioning perceived price as a mediator. The research gap is that endorsement, e-WOM, and price are commonly examined as independent predictors even though price evaluation can be a psychological response to marketing information. The novelty is therefore a mechanism-based test of how paid and peer communication becomes purchasing value. The product remains anonymized as Local Perfume Brand X.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Recent applications of source credibility theory show that persuasive endorsement depends on credibility, identification, and the perceived fit between the endorser and the promoted brand (El Hedhli et al., 2021; Rai et al., 2021). Social-media studies further indicate that influencer credibility and parasocial relationships can shape product attitudes and purchase intentions (Bi & Zhang, 2022; Koay et al., 2024). When an endorser presents a fragrance as desirable, suitable, and credible, consumers may interpret its price as more justified. H1: Celebrity endorsement has a positive effect on perceived price value.

Recent Information Adoption Model research explains that e-WOM credibility and usefulness encourage consumers to accept online information and use it in purchasing evaluations (Verma et al., 2023; Ngo et al., 2024). Reviews can communicate aroma character, longevity, packaging, and product comparisons that reduce uncertainty. This information allows consumers to judge what they receive relative to what they pay. H2: e-WOM has a positive effect on perceived price value.

Perceived value reflects consumers' evaluation of the benefits obtained relative to the sacrifices required. Recent studies show that value perceptions transmit the effects of digital and social-commerce cues to purchase intention and purchasing behavior (Liu et al., 2021; Zhani et al., 2022; Lin & Kim, 2024). For an online sensory product, a favorable price-value judgment can lower the perceived cost of making an imperfect choice. H3: Perceived price value has a positive effect on purchase decision.

Mediation occurs when communication changes an intermediate evaluation that subsequently shapes behavior. Recent influencer-marketing studies demonstrate that credibility, customer value creation, emotional attachment, and parasocial relationships can serve as mechanisms connecting promotional communication with purchase intention (Bu et al., 2022; Shoukat et al., 2023; Koay et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2024). Celebrity endorsement may improve expected quality and symbolic benefits, whereas e-WOM may increase confidence in functional performance. Both mechanisms can make the offered price appear more acceptable. H4a: Perceived price value mediates the effect of celebrity endorsement on purchase decision. H4b: Perceived price value mediates the effect of e-WOM on purchase decision.

This framework differs from a simple coefficient-ranking model. A communication variable may have a weak direct coefficient after perceived value is included but still have an important indirect effect. Bootstrap confidence intervals are therefore used to test the indirect paths without assuming that their sampling distributions are normal.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study uses a quantitative cross-sectional design and 119 complete records containing 19 five-point Likert items. Celebrity endorsement and e-WOM are measured with five items each, perceived price value with four items, and purchase decision with five items. The product name is masked. Individual demographic and screening information is unavailable and is not imputed.

Construct scores are calculated as item means. Cronbach's alpha values are 0.750 for celebrity endorsement, 0.897 for e-WOM, 0.792 for perceived price value, and 0.795 for purchase decision. CE1 has a corrected item-total correlation below 0.30, so a sensitivity model excluding this item is also considered.

The mediation model contains two equations. First, perceived price value is regressed on celebrity endorsement and e-WOM. Second, purchase decision is regressed on endorsement, e-WOM, and perceived price value. Variables are standardized. HC3 robust standard errors address heteroskedasticity, and 5,000 respondent-level bootstrap samples produce percentile confidence intervals for the indirect effects $a \times b$.

An indirect effect is supported when its 95% bootstrap interval excludes zero. Because the data are cross-sectional, mediation represents a statistical mechanism consistent with the theory rather than proof of temporal or causal mediation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1
Standardized Mediation Paths

Path	β	Robust p	R ²	Decision
Endorsement → value	0.245	0.007	0.594	H1 supported
e-WOM → value	0.607	<0.001	0.594	H2 supported
Value → decision	0.743	<0.001	0.515	H3 supported
Direct endorsement	-0.092	0.351	0.515	Nonsignificant
Direct e-WOM	0.032	0.794	0.515	Nonsignificant

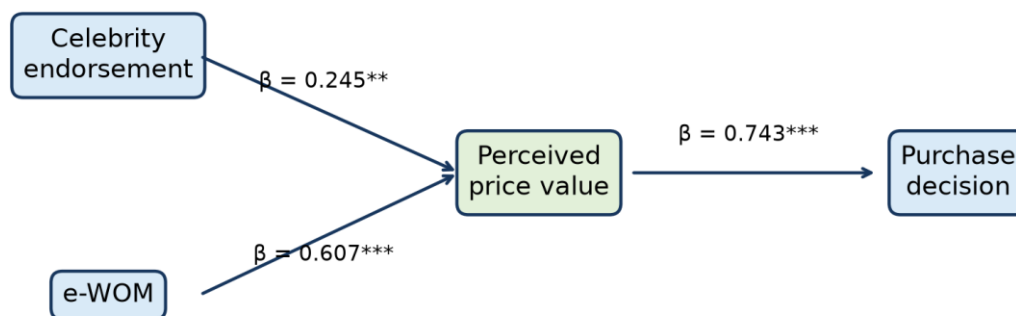
Source: Author's calculations; N = 119; HC3 robust inference.

Table 2
Bootstrapped Indirect Effects

Indirect path	Effect	95% bootstrap CI	Decision
Endorsement → value → decision	0.182	[0.054, 0.319]	H4a supported
e-WOM → value → decision	0.456	[0.282, 0.678]	H4b supported

Source: 5,000 respondent-level bootstrap replications.

Indirect CE: $\beta = 0.182$, 95% CI [0.054, 0.319]



Indirect e-WOM: $\beta = 0.456$, 95% CI [0.282, 0.678]

Figure 1. The Mediating Role of Perceived Price Value

Source: Author's calculations.

The average purchase-decision score is 4.37, perceived price value 4.24, e-WOM 4.18, and celebrity endorsement 4.07. All 119 respondents provide complete answers. The favorable means indicate positive consumer evaluations, although the limited demographic information prevents detailed subgroup analysis.

In the mediator equation, celebrity endorsement positively predicts perceived price value ($\beta = 0.245$, $p = 0.007$), supporting H1. e-WOM has a larger positive path ($\beta = 0.607$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2. Together, the communication variables explain 59.4% of the variation in perceived price value. This result indicates that consumers' price evaluation is strongly connected to the information environment surrounding the product.

In the outcome equation, perceived price value has a strong positive effect on purchase decision ($\beta = 0.743$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. Once the mediator is included, the direct effects of celebrity endorsement ($\beta = -0.092$, $p = 0.351$) and e-WOM ($\beta = 0.032$, $p = 0.794$) are nonsignificant. The outcome model explains 51.5% of purchase-decision variation.

The 5,000-replication bootstrap supports both indirect hypotheses. The endorsement indirect effect is 0.182 with a 95% interval of 0.054–0.319. The e-WOM indirect effect is 0.456 with a 95% interval of 0.282–0.678. Neither interval includes zero. H4a and H4b are therefore supported.

The mediation result changes the interpretation of the previous direct model. Celebrity endorsement and e-WOM do not appear to be useless; rather, their contribution is transmitted through value evaluation. Communication helps consumers decide whether the expected aroma, quality, identity, and performance justify the price. This mechanism is consistent with recent evidence that perceived value links digital-commerce cues and consumer interaction to purchase intentions (Liu et al., 2021; Zhani et al., 2022; Lin & Kim, 2024).

The larger e-WOM indirect effect suggests that user information is especially important in forming value judgments. Reviews offer concrete descriptions of sensory performance and can make the trade-off between price and expected benefits easier to assess. This result aligns with recent information-adoption evidence showing that credible and useful e-WOM supports purchasing decisions (Albayrak & Ceylan, 2021; Verma et al., 2023; Ngo et al., 2024).

Celebrity endorsement also has a significant indirect effect even though its total and direct coefficients are not significant. This pattern is possible because indirect and direct paths can operate in different directions. Endorsement may raise expected value through image and credibility, while other unmeasured reactions may offset its direct relationship with the final decision. Comparable recent studies also show that credibility and relational mechanisms can carry an endorsement effect even when a simple direct pathway is weak (Shoukat et al., 2023; Koay et al., 2024). Researchers should therefore avoid requiring a significant total effect before testing a theoretically justified indirect effect.

For managers, promotional activity should be designed to strengthen price justification. Influencers should communicate specific product benefits rather than visibility alone. Review strategies should encourage detailed discussions of longevity, projection, packaging, and value for money. Sampling kits, discovery sizes, transparent concentration information, and comparison guidance can connect communication with a clearer value proposition.

The study remains limited by its cross-sectional, self-reported data, masked brand, missing respondent profiles, and inconsistency between the earlier manuscript's sample description and the 119-response workbook. The mediation order cannot be verified temporally. Future studies should measure value at a later time point, use actual purchase behavior, collect verified demographics, and compare several price levels or fragrance categories.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study develops the direct-effects model by treating perceived price value as the mechanism connecting marketing communication with purchase decisions. Both celebrity endorsement and e-WOM significantly improve perceived price value, which then strongly predicts purchase decision. Bootstrap results support the two indirect effects, with the e-WOM pathway being larger. The main implication is that communication generates purchasing impact when it helps consumers understand why the product is worth its price. Future research should verify this process with longitudinal or experimental data and include brand trust, information adoption, and actual purchasing behavior.

DECLARATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USAGE

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used artificial intelligence solely to check the consistency between in-text citations and the reference list, improve grammar and sentence clarity, and assist in formulating more specific and clearly stated research gaps and research novelty. Artificial intelligence was not used to generate research data, conduct statistical analysis, interpret the findings, or determine the conclusions. The author(s) reviewed and revised all AI-assisted outputs and remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and final content of the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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