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The Transfer of Coolness: How Music Artist Endorsements Shape Brand Coolness and Consumer Responses in the Fashion Industry

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Master's in Marketing

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BUSINESS
SCHOOL

Department of Marketing, Operations and General Management

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Resumo

Este estudo explora a forma como os artistas musicais influenciam a perceção de *coolness* nas marcas de moda com as quais se associam, e como essa influência afeta depois a ligação emocional e as intenções comportamentais dos consumidores. Com base na *Meaning Transfer Theory* de McCracken (1989) e no construto de *Brand Coolness* (Warren et al., 2019), o estudo propõe um modelo conceptual que inclui Artist Familiarity como variável moderadora e destaca também os papéis mediadores de *Self-Brand Connections* e *Brand Engagement* na geração de *Positive Word-of-Mouth*.

Foi conduzido um estudo experimental em duas fases, com 316 participantes, que permitiu comparar imagens geradas por IA com as de campanhas reais de artistas musicais (Dua Lipa ou Selena Gomez) em colaboração com a marca de moda Puma. Os resultados mostram que os *endorsements* de artistas musicais aumentam significativamente a perceção de Brand Coolness através da *meaning transfer*, o que reforça a ligação emocional e o envolvimento com a marca, conduzindo a uma maior *Positive Word-of-Mouth*. A *Artist Familiarity* atua como moderadora na primeira relação: quando o artista é reconhecido, o efeito do *endorsement* na perceção de *coolness* é mais forte e menos dependente das atitudes prévias em relação à marca.

Estes resultados destacam o papel importante dos artistas musicais como transmissores culturais capazes de transferir a sua personalidade e atributos de *coolness* para as marcas, oferecendo uma nova perspetiva sobre a forma como os atributos humanos conseguem influenciar marcas na indústria da moda.

Palavras-chave: *Brand Coolness*; *Meaning Transfer Theory*; *Endorsements* de Artistas Musicais; *Self-Brand Connections*; *Brand Engagement*; Indústria da Moda.

Códigos de Classificação **JEL:**

M31 - Marketing

M37 – Advertising

Z11 - Economics of the Arts and Literature

Abstract

This study explores how music artists influence the perception of coolness in fashion brands they endorse and how that influence affects consumers' emotional connection and behavioral intentions. Based on McCracken's (1989) Meaning Transfer Theory and the Brand Coolness construct (Warren et al., 2019), the study proposes a conceptual model including Artist Familiarity as a moderator and the mediating roles of Self-Brand Connections and Brand Engagement in generating Positive Word-of-Mouth. A two-stage experimental survey was conducted with 316 participants, comparing AI-generated neutral models with real celebrity endorsements by music artists (Dua Lipa or Selena Gomez) who have collaborated with the fashion brand Puma.

Results show that music-artist endorsements significantly increase perceived Brand Coolness via meaning transfer, which then strengthens emotional attachment and engagement with the brand, leading to higher Positive Word-of-Mouth intentions. Artist Familiarity acts as a moderator in the first relationship: when the artist is recognized, the endorsement's effect on perceived coolness is stronger and less dependent on previous brand attitudes.

These findings highlight the key role of music artists as cultural transmitters that transfer symbolic meaning and coolness traits to brands, providing new insight into how human attributes influence brands within the fashion industry.

Keywords: Brand Coolness; Meaning Transfer Theory; Music Artist Endorsement; Self-Brand Connections; Brand Engagement; Fashion Industry.

JEL Classification System:

M31 - Marketing

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1. Introduction

This study aims to understand how endorsements from music artists influence the perception and consumption of fashion brands.

The intersection between music and fashion has become increasingly common in contemporary marketing. Music artists do not only create cultural capital but also embody symbolic meanings that manage to appeal to younger audiences, often shaping trends and lifestyles. Understanding how these meanings transfer to brands through endorsement is essential to explain how cultural influence converts into brand value.

1.1 Background and Relevance

Several studies have investigated the constant and inevitable presence of music in our daily lives (Rentfrow, 2012), not only in current times but throughout the past centuries (Ogden et al., 2011). Music has been proven to influence consumer behavior (Derbaix & Korchia, 2019; Konečni et al., 2008; North et al., 2016), and strongly affect various emotional aspects of people (Groarke et al., 2022; Schäfer & Eerola, 2018; Zillmann & Gan, 1997). With music playing such an important role, some music artists have acquired influencer status and become human brands (Thomson, 2006), meaning they have, for years, been able to have a strong influence in the brands they are seen endorsing.

Celebrity endorsements have been studied extensively, with various mentions of celebrity music artists (Cashmore, 2006). More recently, with social media platforms providing key insights, influencers have also been broadly studied, which brought an important categorization of influencer types, from micro-influencer to macro and mega-influencer (Conde & Casais, 2023). In one of the most important findings in the topic of celebrity endorsements, McCracken (1989) has long ago studied the possibility and importance of meaning transfer, showing that endorsers can transfer personality traits to almost any product, when done the right way. These findings highlight the power of artists as symbolic transmitters in consumer culture, positioning music as a fertile ground to study how meaning transfer processes shape brand perceptions.

1.2 Research Gap and Problem Definition

As a relevant segment of celebrity endorsement, music artists have long been included in media partnerships with brands, in what are presumed to be positive collaborations. But even though celebrity endorsements and influencers are a well-studied topic, there is a research gap regarding

celebrities specifically from the music industry, and on their influence not only because of the universal importance of music but also due to its association with coolness (Rahman, 2013). While the origins of coolness (O'Donnell & Wardlow, 2000) and brand coolness (Warren et al., 2016) are present in academic research, there are limited studies associating these coolness meanings to specific industries, products, and especially human brands. Addressing this gap is essential to understand the specific mechanisms through which music artists shape consumer evaluations, starting by, in this case, the fashion industry and its brands.

1.3 Objectives and Research Questions

The fashion industry has had a special connection to music, whether it is for both being seen as languages and mediums of expression, or the fact that music artists are often trendsetters, used by brands to promote new products (Hauge & Hracs, 2010; Na & Agnhage, 2013; Strähle & Kriegel, 2018). In this context, there have been and are currently various fashion muses (Baron, 2021) from the music industry — the list includes famous names like Rihanna, Miley Cyrus, Pharrell Williams, and Billie Eilish, and it could go on almost endlessly. Yet, nowadays, fashion brands are also collaborating with micro-influencers (Sinha & Fung, 2021), which explores another side of consumer behavior and leads to different outcomes.

The strong positive impact of music and music artists on people's emotions and behaviors suggests that perhaps music artists can transfer their unique human brand image to endorsed brands. How would the music artist, as a cool human brand, be associated with brands from the fashion industry? Can coolness, in a brand, be transferred through a celebrity endorsement? What are the consequences of that same coolness transfer in terms of consumer behavior? There are quite a few questions to be answered, and some can prove to be useful for scientific marketing research.

In conclusion, this research aims to study what perceived meanings are transferred from music artists to fashion brands in endorsements — namely meanings associated with previously identified dimensions of coolness.

1.4 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is structured into six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research background, relevance, questions and objectives. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on meaning transfer, music artists as endorsers, and the constructs of the conceptual model, concluding with the hypotheses. Chapter 3 details the methodology, including the research design, sampling, procedure, and measurement scales. Chapter 4 presents the empirical results from the Paired Samples test and the PLS-SEM analysis, testing

all hypothesis. The findings are then discussed in Chapter 5, with Chapter 6 concluding the dissertation by summarizing the main insights, contributions, and limitations, as well as suggesting directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Celebrity Endorsements and Meaning Transfer Theory

Celebrity endorsement has been studied in marketing literature for a long time. At first, the influence of celebrities was mostly associated to two main models, the source credibility (Hovland & Weiss, 1951-1952) and source attractiveness models (Mcguire, 1985). The first one (source credibility) pointed that if the sources could reveal expertness and trustworthiness in a credible way, they would therefore be persuasive, while the latter (source attractiveness) focused on the fact that if sources are familiar, liked by, and in some way similar to the consumer they will therefore become attractive and, as a consequence of this, persuasive.

Unsatisfied with the one-dimensional way to look at celebrity endorsement at the time, McCracken (1989) argued that the two main models have flaws, since celebrity endorsers tend to display a stage persona and not themselves, which invalidates the claims of expertness and trustworthiness discussed in the main models. The author also pointed out that the models make it impossible to understand the appeal of any particular celebrity and won't allow us to discriminate between different celebrities in a way that in useful, while also mentioning that the successfulness of an endorser will partially depend on the meaning this person brings to the endorsement process. He then proceeds to introduce the Meaning Transfer Model, explaining that "any product can virtually carry any meaning" (McCracken, 1989, p. 314). This model states that meaning exists as somethings that is culturally present in the world, which is then moved (or transferred) to consumer goods and finally to the life of the consumer. To apply this model, the advertiser firstly needs to find the cultural meaning they which to transfer to the product/consumer, this meaning being anything within "gender, status, age, lifestyle, time, and place meanings" (McCracken, 1989, p. 314); then, this same advertiser should search for "objects, persons, and contexts" (McCracken, 1989, p. 315) to represent and express the desired meanings — this is where the important role of celebrities starts to take place; the meaning is (if well-advertised) then transferred from the celebrity to the product, and from the product to the final consumer, who will absorb the meaning and use it for the construction of the self.

McCracken (1989) tells us that celebrity endorsement plays a significant role in all stages of the Meaning Transfer Process, as the initial meaning resides in the celebrities themselves and the meaning is only effectively transferred once the celebrity is shown advertising the product, in one of the many ways that advertising can be performed. Some of the meanings associated with the celebrity are now the meanings of the advertised product.

In another important construct to analyze the culture of consumption related to celebrity brands, Kerrigan et al. (2011) introduced the concept of “celebritisation” (p. 1510), implying that these celebrity brands are marketing accomplishments and that celebrities are commonly and even naturally exploited to provide economic value and market returns. Utilizing celebrity endorsements also has a positive impact on consumers' perceptions of the brand, enhancing brand credibility and ultimately leading to increased purchase intention (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2017).

In order to comprehend the concepts associated with endorsements, one must understand the meaning behind human brands. The concept of human brand was first defined by Thomson (2006) as any well-known person who has become the focus of marketing interactions. The author advocated that organizations like entertainment companies or even political parties would see great benefit in establishing regular connections between human brands and the final consumer, since human brands who have successfully achieved to gain the attachment of the consumer have the potential to act as product endorsers. But the realization that human brands could become a concept and be further studied actually started a long time ago, when Kotler and Levy (1969) expanded the definition of marketing while suggesting that people could be marketed in the same way that products usually are. Time has shown that the authors were thinking correctly, as we have examples in recent years that show the power of human brands that are intentionally marketed. Take the example of celebrity Kylie Jenner, who paints a perfect picture of human brands put into practice by starting a beauty brand named after herself that (among other factors) helped make her the highest-paid woman in 2018 according to the Forbes The Celebrity 100 list (Osorio et al., 2020). Authenticity is the most important attribute of a human brand, meaning the most successful human brands are the ones where the individual manages to transmit that he or she behaves “according to their true selves” (Osorio et al., 2020, p. 702), and therefore in theory does not display a made-up persona to look more appealing in the eyes of the target audience (Osorio et al., 2020). The topic of authenticity is further studied by Osorio et al. (2023) when the authors found it to be a strong predictor of brand love, mostly exerting its influence in politics, followed by music, movies and sports.

In the context of the music industry, musicians often become human brands, using social media to leverage interactions and increase popularity and sales (Porto et al., 2024). A significant part of the music industry revolves around the relationships that artists have with their fans (Hagen, 2022), and authenticity of the artist will make sure to strengthen consumer-brand connections lead to brand love (Eagar & Lindridge, 2015; Osorio et al., 2023). This is not the first time that the importance of authenticity was mentioned in literature, with Thomson (2006) including it in the factors that cause consumers’ strong attachment to celebrities, while also pointing out that the very same authenticity should be developed slowly and deliberately to avoid any perceptions of opportunism that could arise

from the human brand side. Other important factors mentioned along with the role of authenticity were the need for interaction and the role of competence, and previous general conditions that must apply if attachment is to be formed, like the fact that the consumer needs to be attracted to the human brand (socially or in another manner).

Human brands end up being the focus of some strategic brand alliances, since it is possible to leverage the popularity of these brands on social media to increase the sales of associated products (Kupfer et al., 2018). In fact, celebrity brands — a type of human brand (Osorio et al. 2020) — have been found to influence the purchasing behavior of young female users on Instagram (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2016), and while traditional celebrities (film starts, musicians, sporting icons, TV personalities, writers) have a heavy influence on this behavior, non-traditional celebrities (bloggers, Youtube personalities, Instagram influencers) are arguably becoming the most powerful, due to being regarded as more credible than the traditional celebrity endorsements. The same conclusion can be found in other studies, with Ren et al. (2023) concluding that purchase intention is higher for the consumer when products are recommended by non-celebrity influencers, when compared to traditional celebrity influencers.

Social media influencers (SMIs) are typically described as regular internet users who possess a significant following on social media platforms, being capable of creating trends and influence consumer behavior (de Veirman et al., 2017). Their importance and influence have greatly increased with various factors, including the generalized use of adblockers which made it more difficult for some brands to distribute key messages (Liu & Zheng, 2024) or the high engagement a and ability to gain followers on social media platforms (Casais & Camilleri, 2021).

Based on various literature, Conde and Casais (2023) have summarized the important distinction between micro, macro, and mega influencers. In terms of followers, micro-influencers are then distinguished by having between 1,000 and 100,000 followers, macro-influencers by having between 100,000 and 1,000,000 followers, and finally mega-influencers by having over 1,000,000 followers.

Micro-influencers are perceived as highly credible, also due to the fact they have closer relationships with their audience for being more accessible and authentic (Campbell & Farrel, 2020; Khamis et al., 2017). In comparison, macro-influencers end up having a more diverse audience and mega-influencers tend to be globally recognized, acquiring a status that can be matched with one of a traditional celebrity (Conde & Casais, 2023). When working with micro-influencers, a significant portion of their followers share similar interests, and the resulting increase in engagement enhances the likelihood of a carefully constructed message effectively connecting with a sizable portion of the target audience in a meaningful manner (Taylor, 2020).

Macro-influencers, who have more reach than micro-influencers but less fame and visibility than mega-influencers (Borges-Tiago et al., 2023) are a very interesting option for brand collaborations, since they seem to be easier to contact when compared to the other two categories (Conde & Casais, 2023) — they also bring to the table a very good return on investment and have a substantial number of loyal followers.

Mega-influencers, although very expensive and potentially saturating to the consumer due to the participation in a substantial number of existing commercials (Conde & Casais, 2023), are very well-known individuals (like celebrities) who are easily able to reach the masses and therefore can create global trends while guaranteeing a high level of professionalism (Haenlein & Libai, 2017).

Evidence has also been found indicating that although celebrities' (macro or mega-influencers) posts will be able to bring more followers to a brand's Instagram page, publications by micro-influencers arguably attract higher engagement in social media, with more clicks, comments, and likes (Casais & Camilleri, 2021). Micro-influencers are also potentially more effective in stimulating purchase intention for some industries when compared to mega-influencers, the reason being a set of negative moderators for mega-influencers like envy, materialism, or type of parasocial relationship (Muqaddam, 2021).

2.2 Music Artists and Consumer Behavior

2.2.1 The influence of Music on Consumer Behavior

By having a constant presence in our lives (Rentfrow, 2012), music is able to influence consumer behavior by getting in touch with our fundamental emotions, such as joy, sadness or anger, depending on how it is structured harmonically, rhythmically, melodically, and in other musical details (Konečni et al., 2008). But fundamental emotions are not the only ones who scholars have connected to music – Zillmann and Gan (1997) have associated music listening to mood regulation and the process of shaping a social identity, while more recently Schäfer and Eerola (2018) have linked the same music listening habits to the reminiscing of certain people and periods of life (and nostalgic memories in general), the feeling of social support, emotion validation, and most importantly the sense of belonging and intimacy which most human beings search for. Being strongly connected to pop culture, music will invite people to explore its world, and it has been demonstrated before that no one wants to feel out of the loop in the context of pop culture itself as this might lead to a negative mood and lower need satisfaction, making people try to get back in the loop, which may consequently influence purchasing behavior and entertainment consumption (Iannone & Williams, 2016). With this much music in our lives, musicians start becoming human brands and influencers, as they can be managed in a professional manner and

because they have associations and features of a brand (Thomson, 2006). The Beatles, considered by Rolling Stone (2010) as the greatest artists of all time, have managed to inspire a whole generation and have a global impact through their sound and lyrics (Bătrânu-Pințea & Coman, 2022). We also have modern examples of how music can generate an intense relationship between consumption and self-identity, as it provides us with not only private experiences but also public collective experiences – and the most popular artists today, like Taylor Swift, seem to exploit this connection to the fullest with their lyrics approaching themes of reputation, revenge and romance (Canavan & McCamley, 2020).

Throughout history, the influence of music on consumer behavior is also related to a strong feeling of passion, defined in a dualistic model by Vallerand (2010), consisting of Harmonious Passion and Obsessive Passion. Powel et al. (2023) then suggested that the nature of passion in engagement with music has a critical role in defining the implications of music consumption for the psychological well-being of the consumer. The authors have found that positive musical engagement can be essential to the psychological well-being of harmoniously passionate fans (who have a healthy, beneficial relationship with music), while there is a significant potential for negative, detrimental outcomes when the consumer of music is obsessively passionate, meaning the listener has overly attached self-esteem or desire for social acceptance with the activity of listening to music. Other more recent examples of music influencing society in the context of worldwide events can also be found. During the covid-19 pandemic, older adults found comfort in using music to induce positive feelings, as an instrument of consolation and negative emotion regulation, a resource against loneliness and a nostalgic experience to reminisce positive social relationships and experiences (Groarke et al., 2022). Granot et al. (2021) also investigated the impact of music on wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic – through an online survey conducted in 11 countries with 5,619 respondents, the study revealed that music was the most effective activity for achieving three out of five wellbeing objectives: enjoyment, emotional venting, and self-connection. And while music was as effective as entertainment for distraction, it was second to socialization for fostering a sense of togetherness.

Being fundamental in the understanding of the music industry, a fan has been defined by Duffet (2013) as someone who has a positive, intimate, and substantial emotional affinity for an artist or brand, and fandom as a tradition grounded on communal identity amongst individuals who construct upon their shared pursuits in a media object (Tsay-Vogel & Sanders, 2015). Edlom & Karlsson (2021) have gone as far as to study the hierarchies of music fandom, distinguishing between ambient fans (who listen to and like the music but are not very active), engaged fans, superfans, and executive fans, who make a personal living out of the artist's brand. The same researchers have also identified that the musician's brand learns from the interactions of its customers (or fans) and gains significant and

valuable information to work towards its objectives, however, they've also stated that there's an opportunity for other entities (such as advertisers of music labels) to profit on the engagement of these customers.

Furthermore, in one of the most conclusive research projects relating fandom theory to consumption practices, Derbaix & Korchia (2019) concluded that since music icon fans tend to gravitate towards following individual celebrations of their objects of fandom, rather than the opposite (collective celebrations), this preference may influence numerous consumption practices. As mentioned previously, consumption rituals are one of the most common ways of expressing identity through association to a certain product of brand, allowing the consumer to own the associated meanings of the product (Larsen & Lawson, 2010), from which we can conclude that music is a "hedonic product" (Derbaix & Korchia, 2019, p. 109) that results in strong affective reactions and engagement with music artists. O'Reilly et al. (2013) even pointed out the depths to which music fans are willing to go for their object of fandom, following them around different countries, memorizing songs and lyrics, and collecting albums and merchandise. Derbaix & Korchia (2019) have also identified four kinds of relationships in the context of individual celebration of pop music icons, attributing designations to the idols of music fans, ranging from Quality Manager to God — the first one representing a non-obsessive and positive emotional connection from the fan towards the music artist, and the last one representing a fan that will engage in cult-like practices, involving immeasurable devotion and dedication that includes attempts to copy identity. In a particularly relevant finding, the authors also mention that fan practices in individual celebration of pop music icons include "buying objects related to the celebrity" (p. 115), which we can potentially theorize to be a clear display of how brands can take advantage of strong connections between fans and music idols. Also, the musicians themselves (or human brands) will in many times attempt to cultivate these relationships with their fans, in a phenomenon previously referred to by Baym (2018) as Relational Labor, where not only the engagement of fans is considered, but also the work conducted by the artists to maintain and cultivate these relationships.

The influence of music on consumer behavior, especially from a marketing perspective, is perfectly captured by North et al. (2016), who came to the conclusion that music — when used correctly by businesses — can lead to numerous commercial benefits, affecting decisions like where customers go, how much money they are willing to spend, what products they buy, their memory of advertisements and a whole other variety of thoughts and beliefs related to consumption. In fact, all these consequences of music appear to be related to psychological processes, such as "arousal, cognitive priming, and the effects of emotion on behavior" (North et al., 2016, p. 11).

2.2.2 Music Artists and Sociocultural Influence

By associating themselves with brands, artists are cultivating the phenomenon of idol attachment even more, as studies have shown that music artists end up building a better and more profitable human brand if they serve as role models or spokespeople for other brands or products that are congruent with their own image (Huang et al., 2015). In fact, for music celebrities, infiltrating different forms of media seems to bring almost only advantages, as Deflem (2017) showed after extensively studying Lady Gaga and her rise to fame, pointing out that the artist managed to boost her career not only by this method but also because she managed to appeal to different audiences with her persona's activism, religion, sex, and gender views — characteristics that differentiated her, at the time, from other mainstream artists like Justin Bieber or Taylor Swift. It is also worthy of mentioning that the rise to fame keeps changing its dynamics, far from the merit-based system that was present before the twentieth century (Braudy, 1997), having transitioned to a type of fame that is based around heroic behavior and has shaped consumers' identities into something so powerful they go from being "plain consumers" to "aspirational consumers" (Cashmore, 2006, p. 6).

We are then able to link the modern-era dynamics of fame to music, as the latter can be an illustration of contemporary connections between consumption and self-identity, being deeply intertwined with both individual identity and shared public experiences (Hesmondhalgh, 2008). It is hard not to keep giving examples in this context, when celebrities like Taylor Swift exploit this factor to their own advantage when writing pop song lyrics (Canavan & McCamley, 2020) and have tremendous success, in such proportions that musical artists like Taylor Swift herself, Beyoncé, Ed Sheeran, K-pop band BTS, and The Beatles — who have helped rescue the British economy back in 1964 — have reportedly lifted the economies of some towns and countries in spectacular fashion (Davies, 2023).

But celebrities can also be disliked because of their work and perceived personalities. This was studied by Moraes (2016), showing that some controversial celebrities like Miley Cyrus or previously mentioned Justin Bieber and Lady Gaga were disliked due to being seen as bad role models, making it clear that music celebrities have a role in building social identities. If we track back to the meaning transfer model (McCracken, 1989) — telling us that the meaning associated to a celebrity becomes associated with a product or brand — it is quickly understandable that while positive associations can be successfully established in brand alliances and celebrity endorsements, so can negative associations, and this will be the case with celebrities who are perceived as bad role models. This does not mean that the outcome will necessarily be negative with controversial celebrities, but only that brands need to weigh the positive and negative attributes and predict the final outcome and analysis from the consumer (Moraes, 2016). Yet, it is important to point out that polarizing influencers — including celebrities — will have a strong fan base that will engage in defensive motivated reasoning if they are

analyzing an influencer's argument or statement in a brand collaboration, ultimately leading to higher purchase intention on a specific product and more engagement with the brand's post (Beheshti et al., 2023; MacInnis & De Mello, 2005). With this information, we conclude that, although with the right amount of care and due diligence, it can be beneficial to partner up with a polarizing influencer in a brand collaboration, since it is possible that these influencers' fans are more receptive to their suggestions (Beheshti et al., 2023).

We can easily find examples of music artists' great presence among the world's most important media platforms: a 2024 Instagram ranking shows that the top 20 followed accounts, out of which 7 are musical artists — Selena Gomez ranked at 4th, Ariana Grande at 7th, Beyoncé at 9th, Justin Bieber at 12th, Taylor Swift at 14th, Jennifer Lopez at 17th, and Nicki Minaj at 18th. This kind of media exposure is not new to Selena Gomez — in 2018, due to the artist's influence and after the response analysis to a collaboration where she is wearing sportswear brand Puma, a single Instagram post shared in the artist's account was valued at 3.4 million dollars.

Marketers who work in political campaigns have recognized this influencing power and currently use these music celebrities to boost the awareness and reach of campaigns. This is as recent as Taylor Swift's music being used for Joe Biden's campaign, or Beyoncé's public support for Barack Obama and Lady Gaga's endorsement for Hillary Clinton (Driessen, 2022). Besides, fans consider it mandatory for today's pop stars to express where they stand politically (Driessen, 2022). In the latest political campaign of 2024, in the United States of America, countless musicians were involved in political endorsement, especially for the Democratic Party, with candidate Kamala Harris being publicly supported by big names of the music industry like Jennifer Lopez, Madonna, Cardi B, 50 Cent, Taylor Swift, Gracie Abrahams, Bruce Springsteen, Bad Bunny, Eminem, Stevie Nicks, Olivia Rodrigo, Billie Eilish, Charli xcx, John Legend and many more names on an endless list — the final assumption being that most fans of these artists will inevitably turn their political compass towards the candidates supported by their idols.

We should not fall into the misconception of thinking that the influence of these artists and their collaboration with brands are something that started in the last couple of years. For example — as also mentioned by Moraes (2016) —, Langmeyer and Walker (1991), more than 30 years ago, had managed to prove that musical artist Cher transferred meaning to the brands and products she was endorsing, in this case Scandinavian Health Spas. It is emphasized that that she transferred not only the advertising's message to the product, but some of her own personality features.

Musical artists, mostly in their role as celebrities, are also important and active in times of distress, being no different during the worldwide pandemic of the coronavirus (Chaiuk et al., 2021), with a great increase of online communication that saw celebrities and microcelebrities use the internet to maintain

connection with their audiences, stay relevant and help their fans navigate through a complicated situation. We have examples like Madonna uploading quarantine diaries, John Legend streaming a concert, Miley Cyrus interviewing other celebrities live or even pop stars like Rihanna, Taylor Swift or Cardi B who used social media to express empathy and make donations to charity (Chaiuk et al., 2021).

Some artists like Billie Eilish have been appealing specifically to a Gen Z audience not only by having extraordinary success by a young age, but also due to what they represent to their fans via unfiltered thoughts and an "anti-star attitude" (Faralli, 2020, para. 5). Eilish's music and personality ends up influencing fans in other dimensions, be that her spontaneity, nonconformity, confidence and talent or her baggy clothes that reflect as an anti-body shaming statement — all characteristics far from what used to appeal to Millennials on, for example, the Spice Girls, with their well-defined roles and personalities, far different from a Gen Z that lives a fast-paced lifestyle with constant identity changes (Faralli, 2020).

Moraes (2016) has shown that, for most product categories, marketers can make use of celebrities since consumers seem to suspend critical thinking when they are emotionally invested in their favorite celebrities — this is applicable to musical artists and their fans. Furthermore, even though Erdogan (1999) had already pointed out that celebrity endorsements can benefit a brand through awareness and brand recognition, it is relevant and useful to study the effect of different types of celebrities on different dimensions, like purchase intention and brand equity. We can connect the effect of music artists to what Cashmore (2006, p. 269) pointed out regarding celebrity culture and consumption: "What were once luxuries are now regarded as necessities. What was once improvement is now replaced by upgrading. For all the fantasy and escapist tendencies it radiates, celebrity culture's most basic imperative is material: it encourages consumption at every level of society".

2.3 The Convergence of Fashion and Music

According to market insights by Statista (2025), the fashion industry is expected to reach a worldwide revenue of around $880 billion in the year of 2025. Predictions also include an annual growth rate of 7.65%, meaning a revenue of more than $1.1 trillion. Not only does the fashion industry represent a significant part of the global economy, but it also employs over 300 million people worldwide, with some data indicating an impressive ratio of 1 in every 6 people working in the industry (Talyka et al., 2024). Celebrity influencers are a common presence in fashion campaigns, through regular campaigns and co-creation (Talyka et al., 2024). As with all influencer campaigns, the celebrities' positive behavior and influence can impact the fashion brand positively, while controversial and negative behavior will also transfer that negative association to the fashion brand.

The connection between music and fashion has been studied before and showed a significant correlation between the preferences of music and fashion consumers, confirming that fashion is the most influential and common medium for music expression (Na & Agnhage, 2013). Both music and fashion, as social practices, can be seen as languages — while fashion places individuals within a social context alongside their environment, music conveys expression through rhythms and sounds (Strähle & Kriegel, 2018). For a long time, fashion has been connected to music, with musicians being long established as trendsetters and fashion designers focusing on their lifestyles to promote clothing lines (Hauge & Hracs, 2010). Both industries offer identity-creating attributes, connect their shared target audiences through a specific lifestyle, and subsequently expand their respective target markets (Strähle & Kriegel, 2018). Barron (2021) refers to the famous main figures of fashion brands as celebrity muses — this includes famous music artists, whose status and visibility has made them pop culture representatives, who have begun working with fashion brands like Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Moschino, and Balmain. Celebrities from the music industry are now the visual embodiment of fashion houses and their designer's work, combining a more traditional role of celebrity influencer with a more active role of creative usage of body image, showing just how much the economic value of celebrities is rising in this industry, with famous fashion muses like Miley Cyrus, Lily Allen, Katy Perry, Nicki Minaj, Kanye West, Rihanna, Pharrell Williams and Jaden Smith (Barron, 2021). It is also worth mentioning that these music artists very often collaborate with brands from different market segments, and not only luxury — many times this also includes collaborations with sportswear or fast-fashion brands, like Billie Eilish with Nike or Rita Ora with Primark (Roellofs, 2023).

The rising popularity of influencer marketing has been revolutionary for the fashion industry, all the way from the celebrity influencers to the less famous micro influencers, who have revealed a significant ability to establish deeper connections with their followers and influence them into purchasing products, showing just how important smaller-sized influencers can be in the fashion industry when it comes to influencing purchase intention (Matroji et al., 2023). In the case of celebrity influence — at least when it comes to Generation Y consumers — informational and entertainment value, as well as trustworthiness, are key characteristics in influencing purchasing behavior (Bevan-Dye & Motaung, 2023). It has also been shown that as fashion brands collaborate with these trustworthy celebrities (who earn that trustworthiness by having a known interest in fashion), they are likely to improve brand image by successfully transferring the star qualities of the celebrity to the brand itself, likely leading to an increase in sales (Bevan-Dye & Motaung, 2023). Ryding and Boardman (2023) have argued that although celebrity influencers have a higher number of social media followers and are very effective in traditional marketing campaigns, they lack the high engagement that macro influencers have, making them less impactful within the industry and suggesting that macro influencers are the

best option for fashion brands to collaborate with on social media, due to their similarity and relatability characteristics.

In an era of fashion where once upon a time leading brands like Gap or Banana Republic lost the spotlight to fast-fashion retailers like Zara or H&M, marketing managers are also resorting to micro influencers, sometimes even called “minor celebrities” (Sinha & Fung, 2021, p. 45), to promote their products and ensure a cost-effective approach (Sinha & Fung, 2021). Brands like Supreme (streetwear fashion) have also successfully implemented a non-traditional and cheaper marketing strategy by focusing on Instagram influencers, making sure they reach a younger audience that increasingly gravitates towards Instagram and TikTok (Sinha & Fung, 2021). Celebrity advertising does influence buying decisions, especially in the case of consumers who are looking to emulate celebrities’ styles to strengthen their very own self-image (Bagai & Anant, 2024).

So, as Strähle and Kriegel (2018, p. 27) concluded, “the involvement of the music industry in fashion marketing helps to emotionalize products and experiences, contributes to greater brand credibility, and differentiates and enables direct-to-consumer communication”.

2.4 Key Brand-Related Constructs

2.4.1 Brand Coolness and Brand Familiarity

For a large number of products and services, a brand’s perceived coolness is one of the most important factors to achieve success — this has, for long, made managers wonder how to attribute the coolness factor to their brands (Warren et al., 2019). Although there is already some relevant scientific research regarding the meanings of coolness and brand coolness (O’Donnell & Wardlow, 2000; Warren & Campbell, 2014; Warren et al., 2016), and despite the fact that the topic has had a growing interest from investigation in the latest years, there is still few research on the subject when compared to other common marketing topics (Bagozzi & Khoshnevis, 2023; Napalai & Khamwon, 2023).

The meaning of coolness and where it stems from was analyzed by O’Donnell and Wardlow (2000), in research where the authors argue that the term originates from an early adolescence condition where we feel a discrepancy between our current and ideal self, called narcissistic vulnerability, leading us to try and reduce this drive through “peer-group affiliation” (p. 1). Manifestations of coolness therefore occur — in many different groups and scenarios — to overcome the feeling of narcissistic vulnerability (O’Donnell & Wardlow, 2000). Warren & Campbell (2014) then found the act of expressing autonomy to increase perceived coolness, while also mentioning that a possible way for brands to become for autonomous is through association with people, following the conclusions of the famous

meaning transfer theory which suggests that meanings associated with people can be transferred to brands (McCracken, 1989). People also tend to often gravitate towards groups that share their admiration for the same heroes, celebrities, and idols, in the midst of a transformational process to try and achieve coolness (O'Donnell & Wardlow, 2000).

So far, Warren et al. (2019) seem to have conceptualized brand coolness in the most comprehensive way, finding that cool brands are extraordinary, aesthetically appealing, energetic, original, authentic, rebellious, high status, subcultural, iconic, and popular. The authors have added that even though not every brand has to have every single one of these characteristics to be cool, increasing any of them will result in making a brand seem cooler — examples of this were given by mentioning cool brands like Nike and Apple. Further research has also confirmed this last claim (Loureiro et al., 2020). Equally as important, brand coolness was found to heavily influence consumers' attitude toward, satisfaction with, intentions to talk about, and willingness to pay for a brand (Warren et al., 2019), as well as positive word-of-mouth (Bagozzi & Khoshnevis, 2023). Brands may also go through a standard path in their coolness journey, starting as uncool, evolving to niche cool — at which point they are now more subcultural, religious, authentic, and original —, and then eventually becoming mass cool, by being perceived and more popular and iconic (Warren et al., 2019). Napalai and Khamwon (2023), through analyzing the market of fashion clothing, studied the positively influencing antecedents of brand coolness, finding those to be brand experience and brand identification, and added that brand coolness is a key driver to create brand equity. The fashion industry has an important role in this case, as the population utilized for research — millennials — indicated that they consider some fashion brands to be part of their own identity (Napalai and Khamwon, 2023).

Brand coolness, already seen as a key attribute to success, is expected to influence consumers' attitudes and decisions and accompany the constant change of consumption patterns (Aleem et al., 2022). Suzuki and Kanno (2022) have previously suggested there might be a relevant research interest in examining brand alliances with artists and celebrities, which makes brand coolness a factor associated with, for example, collaborations with music artists. In the luxury industry, moderately incongruent collaborations between brands and rap-music artists were found to have a positive impact in brand coolness, in an interesting discovery that may be a hint for the potential of collaborations with music artists to increase brand coolness (Pantin-Sohier et al., 2023).

2.4.2 Self-Brand Connections and Brand Engagement

The relationship between consumers and brands can go far beyond the simple act of buying. Brands can become part of how people see themselves, or how they want to be seen by others. Escalas and Bettman (2003) were among the first to define self-brand connections as the extent to which a

consumer incorporates a brand into their self-concept. These connections develop when people perceive a symbolic match between their own identity and the brand's image, and when this happens, the brand gains personal meaning and can become an extension of the self (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Self-brand connections play an important role in explaining why some brands become emotionally irreplaceable. They help clarify how cultural meanings such as coolness, authenticity, or status can move from a public figure to the brand itself and, eventually, to the consumer. When a brand's meaning overlaps with a consumer's identity, the emotional attachment becomes stronger and can lead to greater loyalty, willingness to pay, and positive advocacy (Kwon & Mattila, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2022).

Several studies have also shown that self-brand connections can act as a mediator between symbolic brand traits and behavioral outcomes. Dwivedi et al. (2015) demonstrated that celebrity credibility can enhance brand equity through the creation of self-brand connections. Nguyen et al. (2022) found that brand coolness can strengthen these connections, which then increase the likelihood of consumers speaking positively about the brand. This shows that when brands align with the consumer's self-concept, they do not just gain emotional relevance but also drive actions that reinforce the brand's image and visibility.

Brand engagement represents the more participatory side of this relationship. Hollebeek (2011) defined it as the level of a consumer's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in specific brand interactions. Engagement reflects active involvement, not just a favorable opinion. It captures how consumers interact with the brand, share its content, and dedicate attention to it. Brodie et al. (2011) expanded this definition by showing that engagement is a dynamic process that involves value co-creation between consumers and brands through participation, interaction, and emotional energy. In fashion and lifestyle contexts, brand engagement has been shown to play an especially relevant role. Loureiro et al. (2017) found that engagement leads to positive electronic word-of-mouth when brands create emotional and symbolic value. Khamwon and Kularbkaew (2021) identified engagement as a bridge between brand coolness and brand equity, showing that it connects perception with behavioral outcomes. Similarly, Attiq et al. (2022) linked engagement to consumer well-being through its connection with brand coolness and brand love. These studies confirm that engagement is not a passive reaction but an ongoing expression of how much a person relates to the brand.

In the context of this research, self-brand connections and brand engagement work together to explain how meanings transferred from a music artist to a fashion brand influence consumer behavior. Self-brand connections represent the personal and identity-driven aspect of the process, while engagement reflects its behavioral and participatory dimension. Together, they help explain how consumers internalize and act upon the meanings that come from a celebrity endorsement.

2.4.3 Positive Word-of-Mouth

Positive word-of-mouth refers to consumers voluntarily recommending or speaking favorably about a brand without any incentive (Sweeney et al., 2008). It remains one of the most credible and persuasive forms of communication, as people tend to trust the opinions of others more than traditional advertising (Brown et al., 2005). Word-of-mouth is therefore not only a behavioral outcome but also a sign of attachment and satisfaction. Researchers have shown that positive word-of-mouth often reflects emotional and symbolic connections between consumers and brands. When people identify with a brand, they naturally want to share it with others as a form of self-expression or social belonging (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Brands that are perceived as cool or personally meaningful tend to inspire stronger recommendation behavior (Bagozzi & Khoshnevis, 2023; Warren et al., 2019). In digital settings, this behavior extends to social media and online platforms, where engagement with brand content easily turns into electronic word-of-mouth (Loureiro et al., 2017). Active consumers who interact more with brands are also more likely to promote them publicly, reinforcing the connection between engagement and advocacy.

2.5 Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis

McCracken (1989) analyzed the movement of meaning from celebrity endorsers to the endorsed brands, claiming that “any product can carry virtually any meaning” (p. 314). The movement of meaning was described through three stages: first, where the culture transfers to the celebrity; then from the celebrity to the endorsed product or brand; and finally, from product to consumer. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that cultural meanings of coolness transferred to celebrities and influencers from the music industry can then be transferred to endorsed products and brands, and consequently to the consumer. These music industry celebrities and influencers are also likely to be associated with the brand coolness dimensions described by Warren et al. (2019), since the music industry has historically been linked to coolness — with a well-known example being the cool image of jazz musicians (Rahman, 2013). Furthermore, literature also shows the huge cultural impact and presence that music has had for many centuries (Ogden et al., 2011; Rentfrow, 2012), with people relying on music preferences and knowledge to be associated with coolness and to express a captivating personality (O’Donnell & Wardlow, 2000). North et al. (2016) also pointed out the influence of music, stating that brands can achieve a variety of commercial benefits through it.

There is, therefore, reason to believe that music artists who endorse brands can increase the perceived brand coolness of those brands through the process of meaning transfer (McCracken, 1989; Warren et al., 2019).

H1: Music artists significantly transfer meanings of coolness to endorsed brands, leading to higher perceived brand coolness.

Ambroise et al. (2014) summarized how the process of meaning transfer through celebrity endorsements had been studied until 2014. In their work they used the co-branding framework, which considers the association between the celebrity endorser and the brand as a relationship between two (or more) brands and theorizes that meaning transfer can benefit both parties involved. Some co-branding studies, namely Pinello et al. (2022), summarize the existing literature on the subject. The original meaning-transfer theory proposed by McCracken (1989) remains the basis for all further developments.

The objective of this study is to assemble a conceptual model that begins with the co-branding meaning-transfer framework used by Ambroise et al. (2014) and develops it further, grounded in the brand-coolness construct. Meaning transfer of coolness, to the author's knowledge, has not yet been examined and represents a novel contribution to marketing literature.

H2: Artist Familiarity moderates the relationship between Brand Coolness and Post-Endorsement Brand Coolness.

Erdogan et al. (2001) defined familiarity as knowledge of the source acquired through exposure, while Ha and Perks (2005) described brand familiarity as the understanding consumers gain through direct or indirect experiences. Decades of research show that consumers familiar with a brand tend to behave more positively toward it (Hoyer & Brown, 1990; Ojiaku et al., 2024; Wymer & Yacout, 2024). Although artist familiarity has not been widely studied, it parallels brand and celebrity familiarity (Erdogan et al., 2001; Thomas & Fowler, 2015). Because music artists function as celebrities, the same mechanism applies, as familiarity influences attitudes toward both the endorser and the brand. Brand familiarity has also been identified as a useful moderator in various studies (Ruiz-Equihua et al., 2019; Thomas & Fowler, 2015). Accordingly, artist familiarity is proposed here as a moderator in the brand-coolness transfer process.

H3: Post-endorsement Brand Coolness is positively related to Positive Word-of-Mouth.

Brand Coolness has been established as an antecedent to outcomes such as purchase intentions and positive word-of-mouth (Bagozzi & Khoshnevis, 2023). Therefore, brand coolness obtained after an endorsement can directly enhance positive word-of-mouth. Warren et al. (2019) also found that brand coolness relates to self-brand connections, brand attitudes, willingness to pay, brand love, satisfaction, and several positive emotions.

H4. Post-endorsement Brand Coolness positively influences Self-Brand Connections.

Brand Coolness bundles symbolic meanings — authenticity, originality, distinctiveness, subcultural appeal, and status — that consumers use to construct and signal identity in social contexts (Warren et al., 2019). When an endorsement strengthens those meanings, the brand becomes more self-expressive and identity-congruent, making it a more suitable vehicle for who consumers are or aspire to be. This mechanism aligns with research showing that people integrate brands into the self when brand meanings help them articulate identity, often through reference-group processes that render the brand personally relevant (Escalas & Bettman, 2003, 2005). Evidence in services research also links higher perceived coolness to deeper connection-type outcomes and loyalty (Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2022).

H5. Post-endorsement Brand Coolness positively influences Brand Engagement.

Brand Engagement is defined as consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in interactions with a focal brand (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011). Endorsements that heighten perceived coolness add affective and symbolic value — distinctiveness, authenticity, and status cues — that draw attention and increase interaction propensity. Empirical studies position coolness as an antecedent of engagement in consumer and fashion-related contexts (Attiq et al., 2022; Khamwon & Kularbkaew, 2021).

H6. Self-Brand Connections positively influence Positive Word-of-Mouth.

Self-brand connections capture the extent to which a brand is incorporated into consumers' self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). When brand meanings help people define or communicate who they are, they develop a personal stake in the relationship and are more inclined to recommend and advocate for the brand (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Kwon & Mattila, 2015; Wallace et al., 2014).

H7. Brand Engagement positively influences Positive Word-of-Mouth.

Higher engagement consistently predicts downstream advocacy: more attentive and participative consumers are more likely to share and recommend the brand (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011). This relationship is particularly visible in social-media contexts, where engagement manifests as following, reacting, commenting, and sharing, behaviors that naturally translate into word-of-mouth (Harrigan et al., 2017; Moisescu et al., 2022).

H8. Self-Brand Connections mediate the effect of Post-Endorsement Brand Coolness on Positive Word-of-Mouth.

Self-brand connections are defined by Escalas and Bettman (2003, p. 340) as "the degree to which consumers have incorporated the brand into their self-concept". These connections form when there is alignment between self-concept and brand image (Nguyen et al., 2022). Prior studies show self-brand connections acting as mediators or moderators among numerous brand constructs (Dwivedi et al., 2015; Hemsley-Brown & Alnawas, 2016; López et al., 2014; Sarkar et al., 2021; Seminari et al., 2023) and as direct influencers of word-of-mouth (Kwon & Mattila, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2022). Importantly, they have also been proven mediators between celebrity-endorser credibility and brand equity (Dwivedi et al., 2015) and between brand coolness and word-of-mouth (Nguyen et al., 2022). Hence, self-brand connections are expected to mediate the relationship between post-endorsement brand coolness and positive word-of-mouth.

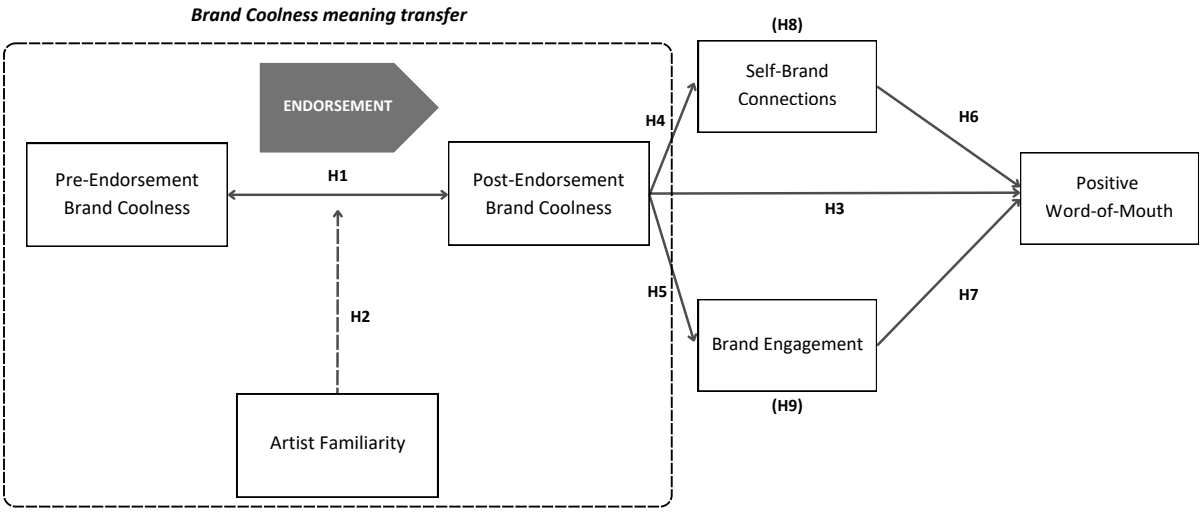
H9. Brand Engagement mediates the effect of Post-Endorsement Brand Coolness on Positive Word-of-Mouth.

Brand Engagement, defined by Hollebeek (2001, p. 565) as "the level of a customer's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in specific brand interactions", has been studied as a mediator between brand coolness and brand equity (Khamwon & Kularbkaew, 2021) and between brand coolness and consumer well-being (Attiq et al., 2022). It has also been connected to electronic word-of-mouth (Chen et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2023; Loureiro et al., 2017). Based on these findings, brand engagement is hypothesized to mediate the relationship between post-endorsement brand coolness and positive word-of-mouth, acting as a parallel mediator to self-brand connections.

Through an endorsement with a music artist, brand coolness can improve, revealing a process of meaning transfer of coolness. This process is moderated by artist familiarity, conceptualized similarly to brand familiarity when viewing music artists as human brands (Cashmore, 2006; Osorio et al., 2020).

The conceptual model therefore assumes that post-endorsement brand coolness can influence positive word-of-mouth both directly and indirectly through self-brand connections and brand engagement as parallel mediators. The constructs included (brand coolness, artist familiarity, self-brand connections, brand engagement, and positive word-of-mouth) are measured according to validated definitions and scales summarized in Table 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Procedure

This study follows a two-stage experimental survey design aimed at testing the transfer of perceived coolness from music artists to a fashion brand. The experiment compares participant responses across two exposure conditions: an AI-generated baseline condition and a real celebrity endorsement condition.

In the first stage, participants are presented with a neutral, non-celebrity baseline using AI-generated images of fictional models wearing Puma apparel. These images are visually identical to the real endorsement photographs in composition, background, and product visibility, differing only in the model's face and hair color. This step establishes an initial measure of Puma's perceived brand coolness without the influence of a recognizable endorser.

In the second stage, participants are exposed to real endorsement material featuring either Dua Lipa or Selena Gomez, both internationally recognized music artists and actual Puma collaborators. The choice between the two artists depends on the respondent's familiarity, after a conditional branching that ensured that all participants view a celebrity with whom they have some level of recognition or previous exposure. After the second exposure, brand coolness is re-evaluated to capture the perceptual change resulting from the endorsement. It is important to mention that the Selena Gomez questionnaire had very few respondents and was therefore disregarded — this happened because respondents would only be redirected to the version of the survey if they declared not to know who Dua Lipa is, while in turn they would afterwards declare to know who Selena Gomez is.

A pre-test with 30 respondents was conducted prior to the main data collection to confirm the realism of the AI-generated stimuli and the clarity of the experimental procedure. Minor visual adjustments were made to guarantee consistency between the two sets of stimuli and to avoid unintended similarity between the AI-generated models and the real artists.

Figure 2. AI model (left image) vs Dua Lipa endorsement (right image)



3.2 Sampling and Questionnaire

Data were collected through an online questionnaire designed and distributed using the Qualtrics platform. Participants were recruited almost exclusively through multiple university groups on WhatsApp, and social media channels like Instagram and Reddit. Some respondents were also recruited in person and through word-of-mouth, following a convenience sampling approach which targeted Generation Z and younger Millennial respondents. Although music habits, preferences, and some sociodemographic items were evaluated with a full sample of 316 respondents, only 244 valid responses were used in the model analysis, as these were the ones who indicated knowing Dua Lipa. There are 10 more valid responses that were channeled through to the Selena Gomez survey, and therefore also responded to sociodemographic questions. The specific Selena Gomez data was disregarded due to the low volume of not only respondents, but also, consequently, data. Some items have a lower number of respondents due to non-response (i.e., abandonment of the questionnaire before completion).

The questionnaire was structured in four sections. The first screened for participants' general music listening habits and familiarity with the selected artists. The second and third sections corresponded to the two experimental conditions described earlier, in which participants evaluated Puma's brand coolness based on AI-generated and real-endorsement images respectively. The final section included validated measurement scales for Brand Coolness, Artist Familiarity, Self-Brand Connections, Brand Engagement, and Positive Word-of-Mouth, followed by basic demographic

questions. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and respondents were informed of the academic purpose of the research prior to beginning the survey.

3.3 Measurement Scales

All attitudinal constructs were measured using multi-item Likert scales adapted from previous research, rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and have been applied to reduce participant fatigue and maintain focus. Brand Coolness was measured using the recent short scale developed by Bagozzi and Batra (2025), based on Warren et al. (2019), which captures the essential dimensions of coolness while significantly shortening questionnaire length.

The construct of Artist Familiarity was adapted directly from existing Brand Familiarity and Celebrity Familiarity frameworks (Acharya, 2020; Kent & Allen, 1994), as explained in the hypotheses section, considering music artists as human brands and thus applying equivalent measurement logic.

For Brand Engagement, items were drawn from Xi and Hamari (2020) and Attiq et al. (2022), with minor grammatical and clarity adjustments made after pre-testing to ensure readability.

Table 1. Measurement Scales and Sources

Construct/Concept	Definition	Original Measurements	Items
Brand Coolness	Evaluates and measures the perception of a brand as being “cool”.	Warren et al., (2019); Bagozzi and Batra (2025).	20
Artist Familiarity	Consumers' understanding of an artist, which is obtained through direct or indirect experiences. Adapted from the construct “Brand Familiarity”.	Kent and Allen (1994); Acharya (2020).	3
Self-Brand Connections	The degree to which consumers have incorporated the brand into their self-concept.	Escalas and Bettman (2003); Bagozzi and Khoshnevis (2022).	7
Brand Engagement	The level of a customer’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in specific brand interactions.	Xi and Hamari (2020); Attiq et al. (2022).	6
Positive Word-of-Mouth	A form of positive information transfer among consumers about products, services, and companies, where information sources are deprived of commercial influence.	Bagozzi and Khoshnevis (2022).	4

3.4 Data Analysis Approach

Hypothesis testing was conducted using two statistical approaches: a paired sample t-test was used to test H1, while Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was applied to test the remaining hypotheses, using SmartPLS 4. PLS-SEM was selected because it suits the predictive and exploratory goals of this research and handles complex models with multiple constructs efficiently (Hair et al., 2021).

Before performing the analysis, the dataset was screened for missing values and potential inconsistencies. Cases with invalid or incomplete responses on main constructs were excluded, and mean replacement was applied when the proportion of missing data was minimal, following the recommendations of Hair et al. (2021). Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis were calculated to ensure the suitability of the data for multivariate analysis.

Following a two-step approach, the analysis proceeded with the evaluation of the measurement model before testing the structural model. All constructs were specified as reflective, and their reliability and validity were examined through standard procedures. Indicator reliability was assessed through standardized loadings, with values equal to or above 0.70 considered satisfactory. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha (α), Dijkstra–Henseler's rho_A (ρA), and Composite Reliability (CR), all expected to surpass the recommended threshold of 0.70. Convergent validity was examined using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with values of 0.50 or higher confirming that each construct explained at least half of the variance of its indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was then assessed through three complementary methods: the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT), with acceptable values below 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015; Kline, 2011); the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which compares the square root of each construct's AVE with its correlations with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981); and the examination of cross-loadings, ensuring that each indicator loads more strongly on its associated construct than on any other.

Once the measurement model demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity, the structural model was evaluated. The analysis focused on path coefficients, coefficients of determination (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was conducted to test the significance of the hypothesized relationships, following the standard procedures outlined by Hair et al. (2021). According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 were interpreted as small, medium, and large effects, respectively.

Finally, as Brand Coolness was conceptualized as a reflective–reflective type-1 hierarchical component model (Becker et al., 2012), its ten first-order dimensions (Extraordinary, Energetic,

Aesthetic Appeal, Original, Authentic, Rebellious, High Status, Popular, Subcultural, and Iconic) were first validated individually for reliability and convergent validity before being aggregated into the pre- and post-endorsement Brand Coolness constructs.

4. Results

4.1 Sample Characterization

The final sample consisted of 316 valid responses collected through the online questionnaire. The sample is predominantly female (56.3%), with an average age of 30 years, placing most respondents within early adulthood. Regarding occupational status, most participants are employed (57.5%), followed by students (20.1%) and other categories such as freelancers or unemployed individuals. In terms of education, the sample presents a highly educated profile: 46.9% of respondents hold a master's degree, 36.2% a bachelor's degree, and the remaining 16.9% have secondary or other qualifications. As for nationality, 80.3% are Portuguese, while 11.9% are from other European countries and the remainder from outside Europe, indicating a primarily local but still European-oriented composition. Table 2 presents a summary of the dataset's main descriptive measures.

Music consumption habits (316 valid responses) among respondents are frequent and diverse. Daily listening is the most common behavior (68.4%), followed by listening several times a week (27.2%). Participants were allowed to select multiple platforms for music consumption, and the results reveal a clear hierarchy: Spotify is by far the dominant platform (76.6%), followed by radio (41.8%) and YouTube (40.8%). Other forms of music consumption include vinyl or CDs (19.6%), social media (12.7%), and Apple Music (8.9%). Genre preferences, also measured through multiple selection, show that pop is the most listened-to genre (75.9%), followed by rock (59.8%), indie/alternative (52.5%), R&B/soul (44.9%), hip-hop/rap (38.6%), and jazz (34.8%). Other categories such as electronic/dance (29.4%) and classical (21.8%) appear less frequently but remain relevant within the sample. Stimulus familiarity was high, reinforcing the adequacy of the chosen materials. Eighty-eight-point three percent (88.3%) of participants reported knowing the music artist Dua Lipa (the remaining 11.7% were shown the version of the questionnaire featuring Selena Gomez). Brand awareness was nearly universal: 97.2% of respondents had previously heard of Puma. Moreover, 71.5% stated that they follow music artists on social media, indicating regular exposure to artist–brand collaborations in digital contexts.

Table 2. Sociodemographic Profile

Items	N	Frequency	%	Notes
Gender	***254***			
Female		143	56,3%	
Male		111	43,7%	
Age	***249***			Mean = 29.9
Mean age (years)		249	-	Std Deviation = 11.039
Employment Status	***254***			
Employed		146	57,5%	
Student		51	20,1%	
Other statuses (combined)		57	22,4%	
Education	***254***			
Master's degree		119	46,9%	
Bachelor's degree		92	36,2%	
Other/Unspecified		43	16,9%	
Nationality				
Portuguese		204	80,3%	
Other European Countries		30	11,9%	
Outside of Europe		20	7,8%	
Music Listening Frequency	***316***			
Every day		216	68,4%	
Several times a week		86	27,2%	
Less often (weekly or less)		14	4,4%	
Listening Platforms and Formats	***316***			Multiple responses
Spotify		242	76,6%	
Radio		132	41,8%	
YouTube		129	40,8%	
Vinyl/CDs		62	19,6%	
Social media		40	12,7%	
Apple Music		28	8,9%	
Most Listened Music Genres	***316***			Multiple responses
Pop		240	75,9%	
Rock		189	59,8%	
Indie/Alternative		166	52,5%	
R&B/Soul		142	44,9%	
Hip-hop/Rap		122	38,6%	
Jazz		110	34,8%	
Electronic/Dance		93	29,4%	
Classical		69	21,8%	
Exposure and Awareness				
Follow music artists on social media	**316**	226	71,5%	
Know who Dua Lipa is	**316**	279	88,3%	
Heard of Puma brand	**254**	247	97,2%	

4.2 Meaning Transfer of Coolness

The meaning transfer hypothesis was tested using paired sample t-tests for all the items of the Brand Coolness construct. This test displayed the difference between means on Pre-Endorsement Brand Coolness and Post-Endorsement Brand Coolness, which are visible in Table 2.

Table 3. Paired Samples t-Test Results for Brand Coolness

Brand Coolness	Post-Endorsement Mean	Pre-Endorsement Mean	Mean Difference (=Post – Pre)	t
Puma is superb	3,42	2,72	0.701	7.999*
Puma is fantastic	3,51	2,73	0.779	9.165*
Puma is energetic	3,67	3,09	0.578	6.296*
Puma is lively	3,68	3,09	0.590	6.345*
Puma is attractive	3,88	3,26	0.615	7.763*
Puma has a really nice appearance	3,82	3,17	0.643	7.289*
Puma is a cultural symbol	3,58	2,83	0.750	9.066*
Puma is iconic	3,64	2,97	0.672	7.988*
Puma is innovative	3,26	2,55	0.705	8.511*
Puma does its own thing	3,37	2,67	0.697	7.984*
Puma is authentic	3,48	2,86	0.627	6.904*
Puma is true to its roots	3,48	2,88	0.598	7.391*
Puma is not afraid to break rules	3,36	2,59	0.770	8.589*
Puma is nonconformist	3,30	2,52	0.783	9.351*
Puma is glamorous	2,83	2,31	0.520	7.817*
Puma is sophisticated	2,75	2,14	0.611	9.891*
Puma is liked by most people	3,82	3,09	0.738	9.558*
Puma is popular	4,15	3,63	0.516	6.249*
Puma helps people who use it stand apart from the crowd	3,34	2,57	0.762	8.867*
People who use Puma are unique	3,14	2,28	0.861	9.779*

***p < 0.001**

A clear pattern appeared when comparing pre- and post-endorsement brand coolness values. While the pre-endorsement means were relatively modest (from 2.14 to 3.63 on a five-point scale), the

post-endorsement means increased considerably, often by half to a full point per item (from 2.75 to 4.15 on a five-point scale). The biggest increases appeared in the Energetic, Aesthetic Appeal, and Subcultural dimensions, all of which surpassed mean values of 3.6 after the endorsement. This suggests that the artist endorsement effectively enhanced perceptions of Puma's coolness, particularly in dimensions related to energy, appearance, and individuality. These results are consistent with the idea that music artists, as cultural figures, transfer symbolic meanings such as authenticity, originality, and distinctiveness to the brands they endorse. Essentially, means increased significantly after the music artist endorsement, and the high values on the t column confirm it by being mostly in the 6 to 10 range, revealing that the mean differences are large relative to the sample's variability. The p-values < 0.001 for all variables also indicate that the mean differences are very unlikely to have occurred by chance, confirming the hypothesis.

4.3 Measurement Model Results

Table 3 presents the measurement model results for all constructs. These results confirmed that the model performed well overall. Most standardized loadings were above the recommended 0.70 threshold (Hair et al., 2021), except for one item in Artist Familiarity ($\lambda = 0.517$). This item was kept because it was still relevant for the construct and did not compromise its overall reliability (construct's AVE = 0.678).

Values of Cronbach's alpha (α), Dijkstra–Henseler's rho_A (ρA), and Composite Reliability (CR) were comfortably above the recommended 0.70 minimum, with most constructs close to or above 0.90, showing high internal consistency (Henseler et al., 2015). Convergent validity, examined through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), also met the usual requirements, ranging from 0.678 in Artist Familiarity to 0.953 in the post-endorsement "Extraordinary" dimension of Brand Coolness. This means that the constructs explain more than half of the variance in their indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

All dimensions of pre- and post-endorsement brand coolness showed excellent reliability and convergent validity, with α, ρA and CR mostly above 0.85 and AVE consistently above 0.80. The other constructs also performed strongly, with Artist Familiarity showing acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.808$; $\rho A = 0.905$; CR = 0.856), although its lower AVE (0.678) suggests that participants may have understood the familiarity items slightly differently, which is understandable given the adaptation of a brand familiarity scale to a new, music artist context. Self-Brand Connections, Brand Engagement, and Positive Word-of-Mouth all presented very high reliability (α and CR > 0.95) and AVE values above 0.80, showing that respondents were consistent in how they expressed their connection, involvement, and willingness to speak positively about the brand.

Table 4. Measurement Model Results

Items	Loading	Mean	Std. Deviation
Brand Coolness (pre-endorsement)			
Pre_Extraordinary *(AVE = 0.872 ; α = 0.854 ; ρA = 0.931 ; ρC = 0.872)*			
Puma is superb	0.922	2.72	0.92
Puma is fantastic	0.945	2.73	0.91
Pre_Energetic *(AVE = 0.879 ; α = 0.863 ; ρA = 0.863 ; ρC = 0.936)*			
Puma is energetic	0.937	3.09	1.06
Puma is lively	0.938	3.09	1.06
Pre_AestheticAppeal *(AVE = 0.895 ; α = 0.883 ; ρA = 0.888 ; ρC = 0.944)*			
Puma is attractive	0.941	3.26	0.95
Puma has a really nice appearance	0.951	3.17	1.06
Pre_Original *(AVE = 0.810 ; α = 0.766 ; ρA = 0.769 ; ρC = 0.895)*			
Puma is innovative	0.908	2.83	1.08
Puma does its own thing	0.892	2.97	1.04
Pre_Authentic *(AVE = 0.827 ; α = 0.793 ; ρA = 0.811 ; ρC = 0.905)*			
Puma is authentic	0.926	2.55	0.87
Puma is true to its roots	0.892	2.67	0.99
Pre_Rebellious *(AVE = 0.876 ; α = 0.858 ; ρA = 0.858 ; ρC = 0.934)*			
Puma is not afraid to break rules	0.935	2.86	1.01
Puma is nonconformist	0.936	2.88	0.91
Pre_HighStatus *(AVE = 0.901 ; α = 0.890 ; ρA = 0.890 ; ρC = 0.948)*			
Puma is glamorous	0.951	2.59	0.91
Puma is sophisticated	0.947	2.52	0.90
Pre_Popular *(AVE = 0.801 ; α = 0.753 ; ρA = 0.768 ; ρC = 0.889)*			
Puma is liked by most people	0.876	2.31	1.01
Puma is popular	0.913	2.14	0.95
Pre_Subcultural *(AVE = 0.831 ; α = 0.797 ; ρA = 0.804 ; ρC = 0.908)*			
Puma helps people who use it stand apart from the crowd	0.922	3.09	0.98
People who use Puma are unique	0.901	3.63	1.06
Pre_Iconic *(AVE = 0.826 ; α = 0.791 ; ρA = 0.804 ; ρC = 0.905)*			
Puma is a cultural symbol	0.894	2.57	0.95
Puma is iconic	0.924	2.28	0.88
Brand Coolness (post-endorsement)			
Post_Extraordinary *(AVE = 0.953 ; α = 0.950 ; ρA = 0.951 ; ρC = 0.976)*			
Puma is superb	0.975	3.42	1.13

Puma is fantastic	0.977	3.51	1.08
Post_Energetic *(AVE = 0.914 ; α = 0.906 ; ρA = 0.907 ; ρC = 0.955)*			
Puma is energetic	0.958	3.67	1.06
Puma is lively	0.955	3.68	1.00
Post_AestheticAppeal *(AVE = 0.928 ; α = 0.923 ; ρA = 0.923 ; ρC = 0.963)*			
Puma is attractive	0.963	3.88	1.04
Puma has a really nice appearance	0.964	3.82	1.04
Post_Original *(AVE = 0.866 ; α = 0.845 ; ρA = 0.846 ; ρC = 0.928)*			
Puma is innovative	0.928	3.58	1.01
Puma does its own thing	0.933	3.64	1.08
Post_Authentic *(AVE = 0.888 ; α = 0.874 ; ρA = 0.877 ; ρC = 0.940)*			
Puma is authentic	0.947	3.26	1.06
Puma is true to its roots	0.937	3.37	1.10
Post_Rebellious *(AVE = 0.925 ; α = 0.919 ; ρA = 0.919 ; ρC = 0.961)*			
Puma is not afraid to break rules	0.962	3.48	1.03
Puma is nonconformist	0.961	3.48	0.94
Post_HighStatus *(AVE = 0.903 ; α = 0.893 ; ρA = 0.893 ; ρC = 0.949)*			
Puma is glamorous	0.951	3.36	1.11
Puma is sophisticated	0.950	3.30	1.07
Post_Popular *(AVE = 0.884 ; α = 0.869 ; ρA = 0.871 ; ρC = 0.938)*			
Puma is liked by most people	0.944	2.83	1.04
Puma is popular	0.936	2.75	1.03
Post_Subcultural *(AVE = 0.923 ; α = 0.916 ; ρA = 0.917 ; ρC = 0.960)*			
Puma helps people who use it stand apart from the crowd	0.962	3.82	1.01
People who use Puma are unique	0.959	4.15	0.85
Post_Iconic *(AVE = 0.895 ; α = 0.882 ; ρA = 0.885 ; ρC = 0.944)*			
Puma is a cultural symbol	0.942	3.34	1.14
Puma is iconic	0.949	3.14	1.22
Artist familiarity *(AVE = 0.678 ; α = 0.808 ; ρA = 0.905 ; ρC = 0.856)*			
I am familiar with Dua Lipa	0.517	4.15	0.78
I am experienced with Dua Lipa	0.925	3.16	1.12
I am knowledgeable about Dua Lipa	0.954	3.16	1.12
Self-brand connections *(AVE = 0.818 ; α = 0.963 ; ρA = 0.963 ; ρC = 0.969)*			
Puma reflects who I am	0.910	2.53	1.20
I can identify with Puma	0.898	2.87	1.23
I feel a personal connection with Puma	0.934	2.47	1.25
I use Puma to communicate who I am to other people	0.924	2.34	1.25

I think Puma (could) help(s) me become the type of person I want to be	0.902	2.39	1.18
I consider Puma to be "me" (It reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others)	0.914	2.31	1.13
Puma suits me well	0.844	3.02	1.24
Brand engagement *(AVE = 0.835 ; α = 0.960 ; ρA = 0.962 ; ρC = 0.968)*			
I love talking about and using Puma's products with my friends	0.912	2.29	1.21
I enjoy talking about and using Puma's products more when I am with others	0.924	2.34	1.21
Talking about and using Puma's products is more fun when other people around me do it too	0.892	2.61	1.25
I feel good about sharing my experiences with Puma's products with others	0.927	2.63	1.24
I feel fellowship with other people who use Puma's products	0.912	2.64	1.30
I like recommending Puma's products to others	0.915	2.79	1.35
Positive word-of-mouth *(AVE = 0.888 ; α = 0.958 ; ρA = 0.958 ; ρC = 0.970)*			
It is likely that I will say positive things about the brand to others	0.930	3.39	1.18
It is likely that I will encourage friends and relatives to consider this brand	0.969	3.12	1.27
It is likely that I will recommend this brand to others	0.963	3.08	1.30
When I hear people speaking badly about this brand, I will try to defend it	0.907	2.85	1.35

Discriminant validity was assessed through the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT), the Fornell–Larcker criterion, and the inspection of cross-loadings. Both tests confirmed that the constructs in the model were distinct and measured different concepts, avoiding overlap between related variables. Overall, the measurement model achieved strong reliability and validity across all constructs, confirming that the scales used were appropriate for the conceptual model and for testing the hypotheses presented in the following structural analysis. These results provide confidence that the relationships explored in the next section are based on conceptually sound and statistically reliable measures. The HTMT results (Appendix D) ranged from 0.061 to 0.872, all of them below the recommended limits. The highest ratio, found between Self-Brand Connections and Positive Word-of-Mouth (0.872), was slightly higher than the rest but still below the 0.90 threshold suggested by Henseler et al. (2015). This stronger relationship is theoretically reasonable, since both variables capture related post-endorsement outcomes: one represents how personally connected participants felt to the brand, while the other reflects their willingness to express that attachment through positive communication. Their proximity in meaning explains the stronger association, but their different roles in the model confirm that they remain separate constructs. The remaining HTMT values were

considerably lower, most between 0.17 and 0.32, showing that the other constructs were clearly distinguished from one another. The lowest ratio was observed between Artist Familiarity and Pre-Endorsement Brand Coolness (0.061), which indicates that respondents clearly differentiated between knowing the artist and evaluating the brand before the endorsement. This also aligns with the expected role of Artist Familiarity as a moderator rather than a direct predictor.

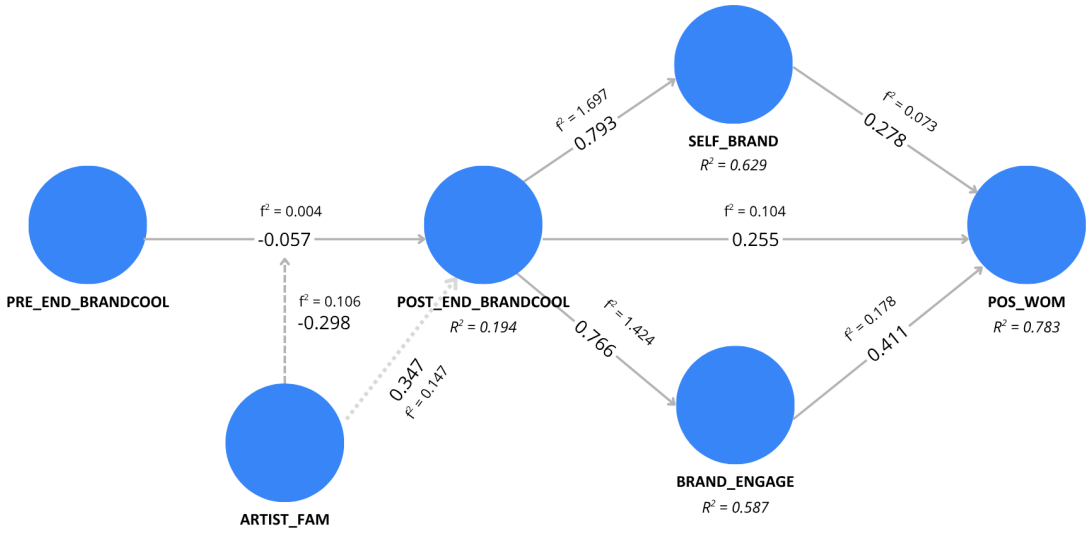
The Fornell–Larcker criterion also confirmed discriminant validity (Appendix E). For each construct, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was higher than its correlations with other constructs, showing that each variable explained more of its own indicators than of any other variable in the model. The lowest diagonal value was for Pre-Endorsement Brand Coolness (√AVE = 0.710), which still exceeded its correlations with other constructs, confirming that the pre- and post-endorsement versions of the construct were empirically distinct. Cross-loadings were also examined to further, with each item loading higher on its associated construct than on any other construct in the model, showing that the indicators were well aligned with their intended latent variables and that no significant overlap existed across constructs.

Overall, the results support the discriminant validity of the measurement model. All constructs were statistically and conceptually independent, and the pattern of correlations was consistent with the proposed model, where Artist Familiarity functions as a moderator, and Self-Brand Connections and Brand Engagement act as mediators between Post-Endorsement Brand Coolness and Positive Word-of-Mouth.

4.4 Structural Model Results

Results of structural model are presented in table 4 and figure 3. Table 4 presents the estimated path coefficient and R^2 values between the Brand Coolness (pre and post endorsement) and their related dimensions, while figure 2 presents a summary of the measures to assess the hypotheses and relationships. Post-Endorsement Brand Coolness emerged as the main driver in the model, as it strongly influenced both Brand Engagement ($\beta = 0.766$, $t = 27.284$, $p < .001$) and Self-Brand Connections ($\beta = 0.793$, $t = 36.606$, $p < .001$), while also having a smaller but still significant direct effect on Positive Word-of-Mouth ($\beta = 0.255$, $t = 4.222$, $p < .001$). These results suggest that higher perceptions of brand coolness after the endorsement led participants to connect more deeply with the brand and engage with it more actively, which ultimately increased their willingness to talk positively about it. The large effect sizes for Post-Endorsement Brand Coolness on Self-Brand Connections ($f^2 = 1.697$) and Positive Word-of-Mouth ($f^2 = 1.424$) reinforce its central importance in the model and confirm that the endorsement significantly reshaped how the brand was perceived.

Figure *3*. Final Structural Model with Path Coefficients, Effect Sizes (f^2), and Explained Variance (R^2)



Both Brand Engagement and Self-Brand Connections were significant in the role of predicting Positive Word-of-Mouth. Brand Engagement showed a positive and significant effect (β = 0.411, t = 6.706, p < .001; f^2 = 0.178, small-to-moderate), while Self-Brand Connections also had a direct positive effect (β = 0.278, t = 3.976, p < .001). Post-Endorsement Brand Coolness also influenced Positive Word-of-Mouth indirectly through Brand Engagement (β = 0.315) and Self-Brand Connections (β = 0.220), confirming partial mediation. This means that part of the overall effect of Brand Coolness on Word-of-Mouth happens because people feel more engaged and connected with the brand, and when combining both the direct and indirect effects, the total effect of Post-Endorsement Brand Coolness on Positive Word-of-Mouth was 0.790, showing a strong overall influence. It became clear that these results support the dual-mediation process proposed in the model: when people see the brand as cooler, they tend to connect with it more and engage more actively, which in turn makes them more likely to recommend it.

Pre-Endorsement Brand Coolness did not have a significant effect on Post-Endorsement Brand Coolness (β = –0.057, t = 0.772, p = .440), suggesting that people's previous opinions about the brand did not carry over once the endorsement was introduced. Artist Familiarity had a direct positive influence on Post-Endorsement Brand Coolness (β = 0.347, t = 6.934, p < .001), showing that people who already knew the artist perceived the brand as cooler after the endorsement. It also played a moderating role in the relationship between Pre- and Post-Endorsement Brand Coolness (β = –0.298, t = 3.626, p < .001; f^2 = 0.106). This means that when people were already familiar with the artist, their

previous opinions about the brand became less relevant, as the endorsement itself had a stronger impact on shaping how cool the brand was perceived to be.

The model explained a considerable proportion of variance in the main outcome variables, confirming that the proposed relationships had meaningful explanatory power. Post-Endorsement Brand Coolness accounted for 19.4% of its variance ($R^2 = 0.194$), which is expected given that it was predicted only by Pre-Endorsement Coolness, Artist Familiarity, and their interaction. The explained variance for Self-Brand Connections ($R^2 = 0.629$) and Brand Engagement ($R^2 = 0.587$) was substantially higher, showing that post-endorsement perceptions of coolness were strong predictors of how people felt and interacted with the brand. Positive Word-of-Mouth presented the highest explained variance ($R^2 = 0.783$), indicating that the combination of coolness, connection, and engagement variables captured most of what drives people to speak positively about the brand. This pattern shows that the endorsement's effect extended beyond perception, shaping both attitudes and communication intentions in a consistent way.

4.5 Hypothesis Testing Summary

The results show that all nine hypotheses were supported. H1 was confirmed with a paired samples t-test on all Brand Coolness variables, revealing that, according to the means, there was a significant difference from pre-endorsement to post-endorsement, providing confirmation regarding transfer of coolness.

H2 was also supported, showing a moderating effect of Artist Familiarity on the relationship between pre- and post-endorsement brand coolness ($\beta = –0.298$, $t = 3.626$, $p < .001$). This means that when respondents were already familiar with the artist, their previous opinions about the brand became less relevant, as the endorsement itself shaped their perception of coolness more strongly.

H3 was supported as post-endorsement brand coolness had a positive effect on positive word-of-mouth ($\beta = 0.255$, $t = 4.222$, $p < .001$), suggesting that brands perceived as cooler after the endorsement were more likely to be recommended. H4 and H5 were both confirmed, showing that post-endorsement brand coolness significantly influenced self-brand connections ($\beta = 0.793$, $t = 36.606$, $p < .001$) and brand engagement ($\beta = 0.766$, $t = 27.284$, $p < .001$). These results indicate that the meanings of coolness transferred through the endorsement not only changed how people perceived the brand but also strengthened their emotional connection and involvement with it. H6 and H7 were both supported, as self-brand connections ($\beta = 0.278$, $t = 3.976$, $p < .001$) and brand engagement ($\beta = 0.411$, $t = 6.706$, $p < .001$) had positive effects on positive word-of-mouth. This shows that when people identify more strongly with the brand or interact with it more actively, they are also more likely to speak

positively about it. Finally, H8 and H9 were confirmed, demonstrating that both self-brand connections and brand engagement partially mediate the relationship between post-endorsement brand coolness and positive word-of-mouth.

Taken together, these findings validate the proposed model and support the meaning transfer theory in the context of music artist endorsements. Coolness perceptions created by the endorsement were successfully transferred from the artist to the brand, increasing engagement and self-identification, and ultimately leading to more positive word-of-mouth.

5. Discussion

The results presented in the previous chapter confirm that music-artist endorsements can effectively transfer symbolic meanings of coolness to brands, supporting the theoretical model proposed in this study. This finding reinforces McCracken's (1989) meaning transfer framework, which suggests that cultural meanings associated with a celebrity move from the individual to the endorsed brand and, ultimately, to consumers. In this case, music artists functioned as carriers of cultural and aesthetic meanings such as authenticity, energy, and distinctiveness that shaped how participants perceived the brand after the endorsement. These results are consistent with more recent work on meaning transfer and human brands (Aliyev, 2025), which shows that artists and influencers can act as cultural intermediaries, shaping how consumers interpret brands through shared values and identities. The significant increase in brand coolness after the endorsement shows that the presence of the artist added new symbolic layers to the brand. This is in line with previous studies linking coolness to perceptions of originality, subcultural appeal, and self-expression (Warren et al., 2019; Attiq et al., 2022). It also reinforces the argument that brands associated with the music industry can gain social and emotional relevance through cultural meaning rather than functional benefits. Similar findings have been reported in more recent research that connects brand coolness with emotional engagement and brand loyalty (Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2022; Loureiro et al., 2024). In this study, post-endorsement coolness had strong effects on both Self-Brand Connections and Brand Engagement, confirming that coolness operates as an antecedent to emotional attachment and behavioral involvement.

The moderating role of Artist Familiarity also provides important insights. Familiarity strengthened post-endorsement coolness perceptions but reduced the influence of pre-endorsement brand attitudes. This means that when participants were already familiar with the artist, their previous opinions about the brand became less relevant, as the endorsement itself became the dominant cue shaping perception. This result aligns with past research showing that familiarity with a celebrity enhances trust and identification (Thomas & Fowler, 2015) but also suggests that highly familiar artists can override existing brand images, reframing them through their own cultural associations. The moderating effect observed here echoes the argument by Cheng (2024), who found that endorser familiarity can change how consumers interpret brand signals by amplifying emotional resonance while reducing the weight of rational evaluation.

The strong effects of Self-Brand Connections and Brand Engagement on Positive Word-of-Mouth confirm that the transfer of coolness does not stop at perception but extends to behavior. People who felt a stronger emotional bond with the brand or who interacted with it more actively were also more

willing to talk positively about it. This result is consistent with engagement research (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011) and with newer studies that connect brand coolness to consumer expression and advocacy (Attiq, 2022; Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2022). The mediating effects found in this study therefore confirm that meaning transfer occurs through several stages: first at the perceptual level through brand coolness, then at the emotional level through self-brand connections, and finally at the behavioral level through engagement and word-of-mouth. These findings also contribute to the growing literature on music artists as cultural influencers. Previous research has shown that musicians often operate as hybrid figures between celebrities and brands (Cashmore, 2006; Rahman, 2013), capable of influencing consumption not only through exposure but also through shared identity and aesthetics. The results reinforce that idea, showing that artists do not simply lend visibility but transfer symbolic meanings that consumers internalize. As Sousa (2025) and Loureiro et al. (2024) observed in the context of luxury fashion, coolness plays a key role in translating cultural associations into tangible consumer responses. This process helps explain why music-artist endorsements can be more effective than traditional celebrity endorsements, since they carry cultural depth that resonates with self-expression and authenticity.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that meaning transfer from artists to brands occurs clearly and measurably through the elevation of brand coolness. This perceived coolness then drives psychological and behavioral outcomes that shape how people connect with and communicate about the brand. The results extend previous research by applying the meaning transfer theory to music-artist endorsements within the fashion industry, connecting cultural meaning, emotional connection, and consumer behavior. They also highlight the role of Artist Familiarity as a contextual factor in this process, clarifying when and how the transfer of coolness is most effective. Overall, this study shows that music artists act not only as endorsers but also as cultural sources that can redefine a brand's meaning. By transferring their own perceived coolness to the brand, they enable a process where cultural symbolism becomes emotional relevance, and emotional relevance becomes consumer action.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Main Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand how endorsements from music artists influence consumer perceptions of fashion brands through the transfer of coolness and to analyze how this process affects different brand-related outcomes. The conceptual model combined meaning transfer theory (McCracken, 1989) with the construct of brand coolness (Warren et al., 2019) and extended it to include emotional and behavioral responses such as self-brand connections, brand engagement, and positive word-of-mouth. The results confirmed the proposed model and supported all nine hypotheses. Music artists were shown to successfully transfer meanings of coolness to the brands they endorse. Post-endorsement brand coolness increased significantly compared to pre-endorsement evaluations, showing that respondents perceived the brand as cooler after the endorsement. Artist Familiarity had a significant but small moderating effect on this relationship. The negative coefficient indicated that when familiarity increased, previous brand evaluations mattered less, meaning that participants paid more attention to the artist's image than to their earlier opinions about the brand. Post-endorsement brand coolness had a strong positive effect on self-brand connections and brand engagement. When participants saw the brand as cooler, they felt more emotionally connected to it and more likely to interact with it. Both self-brand connections and brand engagement also had positive effects on positive word-of-mouth, confirming that people who relate more closely to a brand and spend more time with it are also more likely to talk about it. Post-endorsement brand coolness also affected positive word-of-mouth directly, showing that higher coolness alone can encourage people to share or recommend a brand.

The mediation analysis reinforced these results. Self-brand connections and brand engagement helped explain how brand coolness leads to word-of-mouth, showing that coolness influences how people feel about the brand and how they behave towards it. This fits with Escalas and Bettman (2003, 2005) on identity attachment and Hollebeek (2011) on engagement. The presence of both direct and indirect effects highlights that coolness influences consumers in more than one way.

Overall, the results show that meaning transfer theory can be extended beyond traditional celebrity endorsement and applied to the transfer of coolness from music artists to fashion brands. The data demonstrates that coolness is not just part of a brand's image, but something that affects how people connect with it, engage with it, and talk about it. The study confirms that music artists can act as cultural figures who transfer symbolic meanings that change how people see and relate to brands.

6.2 Contributions to Marketing Literature

This study contributes to marketing literature by expanding how we understand the transfer of symbolic meaning in celebrity endorsement, particularly through music artists. Building on McCracken's (1989) Meaning Transfer Model, this research isolates coolness as one of the specific meanings that can be transferred from a human brand to a corporate brand. While previous studies have explored endorsement effects through constructs like credibility, attractiveness, or fit, this work demonstrates that the symbolic meaning of coolness can move from artists to brands and be captured empirically.

At a conceptual level, this study also strengthens the theoretical development of brand coolness as a construct. Previous research (Bagozzi & Khoshnevis, 2023; Khamwon & Napalai, 2023; Warren et al., 2019) explored its antecedents and consequences, but it has rarely been treated as a dynamic process. Here, brand coolness is not viewed as a static perception, but as something that can be transmitted and reshaped through endorsement. This shows that brand coolness can emerge as the result of an external symbolic process rather than an internal brand trait, extending what has been known about how brands acquire and evolve their meanings over time. The research also adds to the growing body of work on human brands (Cashmore, 2006; Osorio et al., 2020, 2023; Thomson, 2006). Music artists are not just traditional endorsers but structured brands in themselves, with narratives, identities, and values that reflect authenticity, creativity, and individuality. These are precisely the traits that connect most directly with the dimensions of brand coolness (Warren et al., 2019), explaining why the endorsement of a brand by a music artist results in a measurable transfer of perceived coolness.

By integrating coolness, identity, and engagement into one model, this work also contributes to the broader literature on consumer–brand relationships. The relationships identified between post-endorsement brand coolness, self-brand connections, and brand engagement relate to existing findings on self-congruence and identity-based consumption (Attiq et al., 2022; Escalas & Bettman, 2003, 2005), but place them within a context of cultural endorsement. The model provides a clearer understanding of how symbolic attributes, rooted in culture and creativity, translate into measurable outcomes like engagement and word-of-mouth.

Finally, this study contributes to bridging cultural and behavioral perspectives in marketing. It connects symbolic and emotional meaning transfer to concrete behavioral intentions, showing how the aesthetic and identity meanings of coolness, once transferred, shape how people connect to and communicate about brands. It offers an updated theoretical view of meaning transfer in contemporary marketing, one that considers artists as human brands and coolness as an evolving, transferable form of value creation in brand culture. This study also highlights not only the clear connection between the

music and fashion worlds, but also the strong bond between the music industry and our everyday consumption habits — one that can certainly be further explored.

6.3 Managerial Implications

The results of this research provide clear direction for brand managers, particularly in the fashion industry where maintaining relevance depends on cultural connection. The findings show that music artists are not only promotional figures but also carriers of symbolic meaning that can alter how a brand is perceived. The increase in brand coolness after the endorsement demonstrates that these collaborations influence consumers at a deeper level than awareness or exposure. Managers should therefore see artist endorsements as meaning transfer processes rather than visibility campaigns. What matters is not only who the artist is, but which values and associations they bring into the brand relationship, and how those meanings affect the way people evaluate and engage with the brand.

In fashion, where identity and expression are central, this process has particular value. Collaborating with music artists allows brands to project authenticity and creative relevance without changing their product offering or market position. For a mass-oriented brand like Puma, the findings show that meaning transfer can take place even outside luxury or niche markets. By associating with music artists, brands can build symbolic depth and cultural appeal, connecting with audiences through emotion and shared aesthetics. Music and fashion operate within the same expressive space, and this connection allows fashion brands to gain legitimacy through artistry rather than through trend alone. Selecting the right artist remains a key decision: although the results show that artist familiarity plays a role, it does not end up determining success on its own. A familiar artist can strengthen recognition and credibility, but the effectiveness of the endorsement depends on symbolic fit. When the artist's image aligns with the brand's identity, the transfer of coolness becomes credible and lasting, but when the fit is weak, the artist can overshadow the brand or create a disconnect between the message and the audience's perception. Managers should therefore prioritize alignment of values, tone, and audience, rather than focusing purely on fame or audience size.

Endorsement effectiveness should also be evaluated through long-term outcomes rather than short-term metrics. This study confirms that meaning transfer increases self-brand connections, engagement, and positive word-of-mouth. These are durable indicators of consumer attachment and community development. Measuring these variables provides a clearer picture of the endorsement's value and its contribution to brand equity over time. Campaign analysis should therefore include attitudinal and behavioral metrics that reflect how the endorsement reshapes perception and loyalty. Moreover, a music artist endorsement with fashion brands can reinforce the positioning of the brand,

as well as diversify its target. In the case of luxury brands, there would be an association to potential consumers segments that are quite different from the ones related to mass fashion brands.

More broadly, these findings show that collaborations between music artists and brands are cultural relationships, not just marketing tactics. Music artists bring cultural authority and authenticity that advertising alone cannot replicate. They represent creativity, independence, and emotional truth, and when those traits become associated with a brand, they create meaning that consumers can identify with. For fashion brands competing in markets shaped by image and identity, the ability to transfer coolness from artist to brand is one of the most powerful tools for differentiation and long-term engagement.

6.4 Limitations and Future Research

Like any empirical study, this research faces several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. The first relates to the composition and size of the sample. Most participants were Portuguese, which limits the cultural scope of the findings and makes it difficult to generalize the results to other markets. The sample was also modest in size, with 244 valid responses for the Dua Lipa and Puma condition. Some questionnaire abandonment occurred, largely because of the length of the survey and the repetition of the brand coolness scale before and after the endorsement. Respondents often experienced fatigue when faced with the same twenty-item scale twice, which may have reduced attention in the later sections. A larger and more diverse sample would help confirm whether the same relationships hold across countries and cultural settings.

The second limitation involves the stimuli used. Although the pre-test confirmed that most respondents did not identify the first image as AI-generated, some may have noticed differences in realism between the two conditions. The use of only one brand, Puma, also narrows the generalizability of the results. The inclusion of a smaller test with Selena Gomez provided partial support for consistency, but the main analysis relied on the Dua Lipa condition. It remains unclear whether the same effects would appear with other brands, especially in industries such as technology or cosmetics, where consumer expectations and brand meanings are different. Still, the fact that a single pair of static images was sufficient to shift perceptions of coolness suggests that full campaigns involving music artists could generate even stronger effects.

Measurement also presents some boundaries. The indicator with the lowest loading in Artist Familiarity ($\lambda = 0.52$) was retained for theoretical reasons, as it represented a relevant aspect of recognition and awareness. Although weak, its inclusion added conceptual depth and did not compromise the reliability of the construct as a whole.

All data were self-reported, meaning that the answers relied on participants' own perceptions and interpretations rather than on observed behaviour. This can create two possible biases. First, social desirability bias, where respondents may unconsciously try to answer in a way that feels socially acceptable or consistent with what they think the researcher expects. Second, an overestimation of engagement, since people often report higher levels of involvement or connection than they display in real behaviour.

The study design was cross-sectional, which means that the data were collected at one point in time, which makes it difficult to establish how endorsement exposure affects behaviour in the long run. A longitudinal approach, where the same respondents are studied over a period of time, would help to understand how meaning transfer develops and whether changes in brand perception or engagement remain stable. Future studies should also adopt an experimental design using richer and more realistic stimuli such as campaigns, music videos, or multi-format content to see how meaning transfer operates across different media contexts, although these types of studies highly depend of the evolution of easy-to-use AI tools that produce good final results.

Looking ahead, several directions appear promising. Further research should test whether the transfer of coolness observed here extends to other types of endorsers such as actors, athletes, or digital creators, and whether these groups activate different forms of meaning transfer. Expanding the study to other industries could also reveal whether coolness operates similarly across categories. Cross-cultural comparisons could potentially clarify the influence of local identity and music culture on endorsement effectiveness. Beyond that, it would be relevant to explore new constructs that capture the evolution of consumer–brand relationships after endorsement, without relying on conventional outcome variables — these constructs could be any of the already studied consequences of brand coolness (Khamwon & Napalai, 2023; Warren et al., 2019).

Overall, the limitations of this study mainly concern scope and design, but they also point to future opportunities. The fact that static images alone could shift perceptions of brand coolness demonstrates how powerful music artists can be as meaning carriers. A broader and more dynamic research design could show just how far that transfer of coolness can go when translated into real campaigns and sustained brand narratives.

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Appendices

Appendix A — Questionnaire (Qualtrics Survey)

Introduction

Hello! My name is João Osório and I'm developing this survey as part of my Master's thesis in Marketing. The questionnaire is based on academic work that aims to study the consumer's perception about brands and music artists.

There are no right or wrong answers. All information shared will be treated anonymously and confidentially, and it is not possible to identify each respondent. The results will be used for academic purposes only.

The approximate time to complete this questionnaire is 6 minutes. Thank you in advance for your availability and attention!

- ◯ I confirm my interest in participating in this survey
- ◯ I have no interest in participating in this survey

Pre-endorsement questions

In the past month, how often have you listened to music?

- ◯ Never
- ◯ A few times
- ◯ Several times a week
- ◯ Every day

How do you usually listen to music? You can pick multiple options.

- [ ] Spotify
- [ ] Apple Music
- [ ] Youtube
- [ ] Radio
- [ ] Social Media (e.g., Instagram, TikTok)
- [ ] Vinyl / CDs
- [ ] Others

What music genres do you enjoy? You can pick multiple options.

- [ ] Pop
- [ ] Rock
- [ ] Hip Hop / Rap
- [ ] R&B / Soul
- [ ] Electronic / Dance
- [ ] Classic
- [ ] Jazz
- [ ] Indie / Alternative
- [ ] Others
- [ ] I don't know / I'm not sure

Do you follow music artists on social media?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Redirecting Block Dua Lipa

Do you know who the music artist Dua Lipa is?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

AI Endorsement Block Dua Lipa

Please have a look at the following pictures promoting clothing collections from the fashion brand Puma:



Based on the Puma campaign pictures you just saw, evaluate each one of the following statements using the scale from 1 = Does not describe Puma at all to 5 = Describes Puma very well

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Puma is superb	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is fantastic	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is energetic	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is lively	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is attractive	○	○	○	○	○
Puma has a really nice appearance	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is a cultural symbol	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is iconic	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is innovative	○	○	○	○	○
Puma does its own thing	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is authentic	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is true to its roots	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is not afraid to break rules	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is nonconformist	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is glamorous	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is sophisticated	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is liked by most people	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is popular	○	○	○	○	○
Puma helps people who use it stand	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
apart from the crowd					
People who use Puma are unique	○	○	○	○	○

Brand Familiarity Dua Lipa Block

Please read carefully each one of the informations about the music artist Dua Lipa using the scale from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I am familiar with Dua Lipa	○	○	○	○	○
I am experienced with Dua Lipa	○	○	○	○	○
I am knowledgeable about Dua Lipa	○	○	○	○	○

Real Endorsement Block Dua Lipa

Please have a look at the following real pictures (the previous ones were generated by artificial intelligence) promoting clothing collections from the same fashion brand as before, Puma, but endorsed by music artist Dua Lipa:



Based on the Puma campaign pictures you just saw, with a Dua Lipa endorsement, evaluate each one of the following statements using the scale from 1 = Does not describe Puma at all to 5 = Describes Puma very well

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Puma is superb	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is fantastic	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is energetic	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Puma is lively	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is attractive	○	○	○	○	○
Puma has a really nice appearance	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is a cultural symbol	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is iconic	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is innovative	○	○	○	○	○
Puma does its own thing	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is authentic	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is true to its roots	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is not afraid to break rules	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is nonconformist	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is glamorous	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is sophisticated	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is liked by most people	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is popular	○	○	○	○	○
Puma helps people who use it stand apart from the crowd	○	○	○	○	○
People who use Puma are unique	○	○	○	○	○

Other Constructs Block Dua Lipa

Considering the previous Puma and Dua Lipa campaigns/endorsement, please rate the following sentences by using the scale from 1= Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Puma reflects who I am	○	○	○	○	○
I can identify with Puma	○	○	○	○	○
I feel a personal connection with Puma	○	○	○	○	○
I use Puma to communicate who I am to other people	○	○	○	○	○
I think Puma (could) help(s) me become the type of person I want to be	○	○	○	○	○
I consider Puma to be "me" (It reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others)	○	○	○	○	○
Puma suits me well	○	○	○	○	○

Considering the previous Puma and Dua Lipa campaigns/endorsement, please rate the following sentences by using the scale from 1= Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I love talking about and using Puma's products with my friends	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoy talking about and using Puma's products more when I am with others	○	○	○	○	○
Talking about and using Puma's products is more fun when other people around me do it too	○	○	○	○	○
I feel good about sharing my experiences with Puma's products with others	○	○	○	○	○
I feel fellowship with other people who use Puma's products	○	○	○	○	○
I like recommending Puma's products to others	○	○	○	○	○

Considering the previous Puma and Dua Lipa campaigns/endorsement, please rate the following sentences by using the scale from 1= Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
It is likely that I will say positive things about the brand to others	○	○	○	○	○
It is likely that I will encourage friends and relatives to consider this brand	○	○	○	○	○
It is likely that I will recommend this brand to others	○	○	○	○	○
When I hear people speaking badly about this brand, I will try to defend it	○	○	○	○	○

Final Questions

Had you ever heard of Puma before?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

What is your gender?

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Non-binary / third gender
- ○ Prefer not to say

What is your age (please insert numbers, for example: 20)?

What are your academic qualifications?

- ○ Inferior to 9th grade
- ○ 9th grade
- ○ 12th grade
- ○ Bachelor's degree
- ○ Master's degree
- ○ PhD
- ○ Other

What is your occupation?

- ○ Student
- ○ Working student
- ○ Self-employed
- ○ Employed
- ○ Unemployed
- ○ Retired
- ○ Other

What is your nationality?

- ○ Portuguese
- ○ Spanish
- ○ French
- ○ Italian
- ○ German
- ○ Dutch
- ○ Belgian

- ○ English
- ○ Polish
- ○ Other

Redirecting Block Selena Gomez

Do you know who the music artist Selena Gomez is?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

AI Endorsement Block Selena Gomez

Please have a look at the following pictures promoting clothing collections from the fashion brand Puma:



Based on the Puma campaign pictures you just saw, evaluate each one of the following statements using the scale from 1 = Does not describe Puma at all to 5 = Describes Puma very well

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Puma is superb	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is fantastic	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is energetic	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Puma is lively	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is attractive	○	○	○	○	○
Puma has a really nice appearance	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is a cultural symbol	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is iconic	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is innovative	○	○	○	○	○
Puma does its own thing	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is authentic	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is true to its roots	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is not afraid to break rules	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is nonconformist	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is glamorous	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is sophisticated	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is liked by most people	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is popular	○	○	○	○	○
Puma helps people who use it stand apart from the crowd	○	○	○	○	○
People who use Puma are unique	○	○	○	○	○

Brand Familiarity Selena Gomez Block

Please read carefully each one of the informations about the music artist Selena Gomez using the scale from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I am familiar with Selena Gomez	○	○	○	○	○
I am experienced with Selena Gomez	○	○	○	○	○
I am knowledgeable about Selena Gomez	○	○	○	○	○

Real Endorsement Block Selena Gomez

Please have a look at the following real pictures (the previous ones were generated by artificial intelligence) promoting clothing collections from the same fashion brand as before, Puma, but endorsed by music artist Selena Gomez:



Based on the Puma campaign pictures you just saw, with a Selena Gomez endorsement, evaluate each one of the following statements using the scale from 1 = Does not describe Puma at all to 5 = Describes Puma very well

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Puma is superb	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is fantastic	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is energetic	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Puma is lively	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is attractive	○	○	○	○	○
Puma has a really nice appearance	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is a cultural symbol	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is iconic	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is innovative	○	○	○	○	○
Puma does its own thing	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is authentic	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is true to its roots	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is not afraid to break rules	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is nonconformist	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is glamorous	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is sophisticated	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is liked by most people	○	○	○	○	○
Puma is popular	○	○	○	○	○
Puma helps people who use it stand apart from the crowd	○	○	○	○	○
People who use Puma are unique	○	○	○	○	○

Other Constructs Block Selena Gomez

Considering the previous Puma and Selena Gomez campaigns/endorsement, please rate the following sentences by using the scale from 1= Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Puma reflects who I am	○	○	○	○	○
I can identify with Puma	○	○	○	○	○
I feel a personal connection with Puma	○	○	○	○	○
I use Puma to communicate who I am to other people	○	○	○	○	○
I think Puma (could) help(s) me become the type of person I want to be	○	○	○	○	○
I consider Puma to be "me" (It reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others)	○	○	○	○	○
Puma suits me well	○	○	○	○	○

Considering the previous Puma and Selena Gomez campaigns/endorsement, please rate the following sentences by using the scale from 1= Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I love talking about and using Puma's products with my friends	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoy talking about and using Puma's products more when I am with others	○	○	○	○	○
Talking about and using Puma's products is more fun when other people around me do it too	○	○	○	○	○
I feel good about sharing my experiences with Puma's products with others	○	○	○	○	○
I feel fellowship with other people who use Puma's products	○	○	○	○	○
I like recommending Puma's products to others	○	○	○	○	○

Considering the previous Puma and Selena Gomez campaigns/endorsement, please rate the following sentences by using the scale from 1= Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
It is likely that I will say positive things about the brand to others	○	○	○	○	○
It is likely that I will encourage friends and relatives to consider this brand	○	○	○	○	○
It is likely that I will recommend this brand to others	○	○	○	○	○
When I hear people speaking badly about this brand, I will try to defend it	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix B — Paired Samples Statistics

	Paired Samples Statistics (pre vs post)	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Puma is superb	2.72	244	.920	.059
	Puma is superb	3.42	244	1.128	.072
Pair 2	Puma is fantastic	2.73	244	.911	.058
	Puma is fantastic	3.51	244	1.083	.069
Pair 3	Puma is energetic	3.09	244	1.090	.070
	Puma is energetic	3.67	244	1.061	.068
Pair 4	Puma is lively	3.09	244	1.060	.068
	Puma is lively	3.68	244	.997	.064
Pair 5	Puma is attractive	3.26	244	.945	.061
	Puma is attractive	3.88	244	1.043	.067
Pair 6	Puma has a really nice appearance	3.17	244	1.063	.068
	Puma has a really nice appearance	3.82	244	1.044	.067
Pair 7	Puma is a cultural symbol	2.83	244	1.077	.069
	Puma is a cultural symbol	3.58	244	1.099	.070
Pair 8	Puma is iconic	2.97	244	1.038	.066
	Puma is iconic	3.64	244	1.078	.069
Pair 9	Puma is innovative	2.55	244	.871	.056
	Puma is innovative	3.26	244	1.059	.068
Pair	Puma does its own thing	2.67	244	.985	.063
	Puma does its own thing	3.37	244	1.098	.070
Pair	Puma is authentic	2.86	244	1.014	.065
	Puma is authentic	3.48	244	1.032	.066

Pair	Puma is true to its roots	2.88	244	.912	.058
	Puma is true to its roots	3.48	244	.940	.060
Pair	Puma is not afraid to break rules	2.59	244	.914	.058
	Puma is not afraid to break rules	3.36	244	1.105	.071
Pair	Puma is nonconformist	2.52	244	.900	.058
	Puma is nonconformist	3.30	244	1.072	.069
Pair	Puma is glamorous	2.31	244	1.077	.069
	Puma is glamorous	2.83	244	1.036	.066
Pair	Puma is sophisticated	2.14	244	.953	.061
	Puma is sophisticated	2.75	244	1.027	.066
Pair	Puma is liked by most people	3.09	244	.980	.063
	Puma is liked by most people	3.82	244	1.013	.065
Pair	Puma is popular	3.63	244	1.056	.068
	Puma is popular	4.15	244	.848	.054
Pair	Puma helps people who use it stand apart	2.57	244	.951	.061
	Puma helps people who use it stand apart	3.34	244	1.141	.073
Pair	People who use Puma are unique	2.28	244	.878	.056
	People who use Puma are unique	3.14	244	1.221	.078

Appendix C — Paired Samples Test

Paired Samples Test	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
				Lower	*Upper*				
Puma is superb	-.701	1.369	.088	-.873	-.528	-7.999	243	<.001	<.001
Puma is fantastic	-.779	1.327	.085	-.946	-.611	-9.165	243	<.001	<.001
Puma is energetic	-.578	1.434	.092	-.759	-.397	-6.296	243	<.001	<.001
Puma is lively	-.590	1.453	.093	-.773	-.407	-6.345	243	<.001	<.001
Puma is attractive	-.615	1.237	.079	-.771	-.459	-7.763	243	<.001	<.001
Puma has a really nice appearance	-.643	1.379	.088	-.817	-.470	-7.289	243	<.001	<.001
Puma is a cultural symbol	-.750	1.292	.083	-.913	-.587	-9.066	243	<.001	<.001
Puma is iconic	-.672	1.314	.084	-.838	-.506	-7.988	243	<.001	<.001
Puma is innovative	-.705	1.294	.083	-.868	-.542	-8.511	243	<.001	<.001

Puma does its own thing	-.697	1.363	.087	-.869	-.525	-7.984	243	<.001	<.001
Puma is authentic	-.627	1.419	.091	-.806	-.448	-6.904	243	<.001	<.001
Puma is true to its roots	-.598	1.265	.081	-.758	-.439	-7.391	243	<.001	<.001
Puma is not afraid to break rules	-.770	1.401	.090	-.947	-.594	-8.589	243	<.001	<.001
Puma is nonconformist	-.783	1.308	.084	-.948	-.618	-9.351	243	<.001	<.001
Puma is glamorous	-.520	1.040	.067	-.652	-.389	-7.817	243	<.001	<.001
Puma is sophisticated	-.611	.964	.062	-.732	-.489	-9.891	243	<.001	<.001
Puma is liked by most people	-.738	1.206	.077	-.890	-.586	-9.558	243	<.001	<.001
Puma is popular	-.516	1.291	.083	-.679	-.354	-6.249	243	<.001	<.001
Puma helps people who use it stand apart from the crowd	-.762	1.343	.086	-.932	-.593	-8.867	243	<.001	<.001
People who use Puma are unique	-.861	1.375	.088	-1.034	-.687	-9.779	243	<.001	<.001

Appendix D — HTMT Ratios (Heterotrait-Monotrait)

Constructs	AF	BE	Post_BC	P-WOM	Pre_BC	SB Connections	AF x Pre_BC
Artist Familiarity							
Brand Engagement	0.259						
Post-Endorsement Brand Coolness	0.297	0.791					
Positive WOM	0.234	0.882	0.814				
Pre-Endorsement Brand Coolness	0.199	0.198	0.185	0.199			
Self-Brand Connections	0.230	0.903	0.818	0.872	0.174		
Artist Familiarity × Pre-Endorsement Brand Coolness	0.061	0.173	0.275	0.248	0.039	0.209	

Appendix E — Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Constructs	AF	BE	Post_BC	P-WOM	Pre_BC	SB Connections
Artist Familiarity	**0.823**					
Brand Engagement	0.296	**0.914**				
Post-Endorsement Brand Coolness	0.325	0.766	**0.800**			
Positive WOM	0.259	0.848	0.791	**0.943**		
Pre-Endorsement Brand Coolness	0.090	-0.170	-0.025	-0.185	**0.710**	
Self-Brand Connections	0.229	0.869	0.793	0.838	-0.146	**0.904**

Appendix F — Structural Path Coefficients (Bootstrapping Results)

Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	Significance
Artist Familiarity -> Post_BC	0.346	6.934	0.000	Highly Significant
Artist Familiarity x Pre_BC -> Post_BC	-0.298	3.626	0.000	Highly Significant
Brand Engagement -> Positive WOM	0.411	6.706	0.000	Highly Significant
Post_BC -> Brand Engagement	0.766	27.284	0.000	Highly Significant
Post_BC -> Positive WOM	0.255	4.222	0.000	Highly Significant
Post_BC -> SB Connections	0.793	36.606	0.000	Highly Significant
Pre_BC -> Post_BC	-0.057	0.772	0.440	Not Significant
SB Connections -> Positive WOM	0.278	3.976	0.000	Highly Significant