

# ***The Impact of Expert Endorser in Electric Vehicle Advertising on Consumers' Purchase Intention***

**Qingwei Wang<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*University of Nottingham Ningbo China, Ningbo, 315000, China*  
*a. bixqw10@nottingham.edu.cn*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** With increasing environmental protection awareness among the Chinese public, new energy vehicles are gradually replacing traditional gasoline vehicles and have become the mainstream choice for consumers. This prompts new energy vehicle brands to improve their marketing strategies to attract consumers. Among those marketing strategies, expert endorsements have proven to be an effective marketing method for automobile brands. This research adopted the literature analysis method to explore how expert endorsers impact purchase willingness based on the SOR model in the context of new energy vehicle advertisements. In addition, self-construal is added to the model to study its moderating role in the influence process of expert endorsement. Finally, the study found that expert endorsers can indirectly affect consumers' purchase intentions through perceived trust, and different types of self-construal can moderate the level of consumers' perceived trust in expert endorsers. This study provided strategic suggestions for the precise marketing of new energy vehicle brands and expanded the application of the SOR model in green marketing.

**Keywords:** expert endorsement, new energy vehicles, sor model, self-construal

## **1. Introduction**

With increasing environmental protection awareness, car consumers are gradually favoring new energy vehicles. As the top electric vehicle market worldwide, the Chinese market's sales are predicted to reach \$ 292.10 by 2023 [1]. China's new energy vehicle market is highly competitive, leading Tesla BYD and other NEV brands actively adopt diversified marketing strategies such as advertising and influencer marketing to attract consumers [2]. As a marketing tool to convey reliable information through persons with professional knowledge, expert endorsement advertising is essential for marketing new energy vehicles. Past research revealed that expert endorsement advertising is a successful strategy for raising brand awareness, enhancing brand perception, and changing consumer behavior [3]. However, the self-construal theory postulates that consumers with different types of self-construal may have different attitudes toward brand marketing strategies [4]. Therefore, this study will use the literature analysis method to study the influence of expert endorsers on consumers' purchase intentions by combining the SOR model and self-construction theory in the context of new energy vehicle advertisements. This study has two primary purposes: exploring the indirect influence of expert endorsers on consumption willingness and studying how self-construal moderates the influence process between perceived trust and purchase willingness. Therefore, this

paper will first review the existing literature and then use evidence to demonstrate the two primary research questions and propose the management impact of the research.

## 2. Theoretical Grounding

### 2.1. The Stimulus Organism Response Model

The SOR model illustrates that the external environment will stimulate individual behavior and psychological response and process the stimulus to produce appropriate behavior [5]. As shown in Figure 1, this model consists of inputs, processes, and outputs. Input refers to external factors related to the environment, which will evoke individual internal state variables (O) and thus produce actions and reactions (R) [5]. In the celebrity endorsement field, some studies have found that celebrity endorsement in advertising can improve the effectiveness of advertising stimulation, thus improving consumers' emotional and cognitive input and influencing purchasing behavior [6].

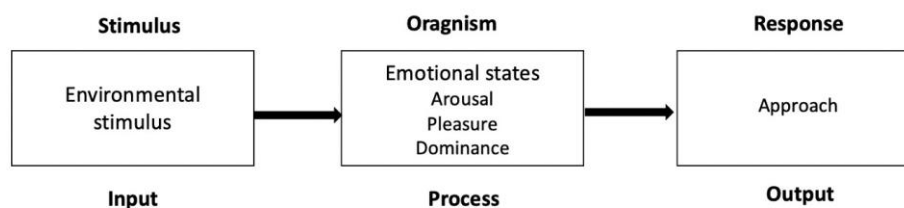


Figure 1: Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) Model

### 2.2. Expert Endorser

Expert endorser refers to the introduction or recommendation of a product to consumers by an expert with relevant experience and professional knowledge in a specific field [7]. Previous research has shown that expert endorsement can increase the trustworthiness of an advertisement by increasing the credibility of the source [8]. When the source's credibility is high, consumers are less likely to require product-related elaboration, more likely to make unthinking decisions, and positively influence their purchase intention [8].

### 2.3. Perceived Trustworthiness

Perceived trustworthiness is explained as a person's self-assessment and belief about the trustworthiness of other entities [9]. Perceived trustworthiness is usually generated by a series of trusting stimuli and affects consumer perceptions and behavioral participation [9]. Previous studies used perceived trustworthiness as an internal assessment of the stimulus in the SOR model to study how sponsored advertising influence purchase intention in endorsement advertising [3].

### 2.4. Self-construal

Self-construal can be defined as the way how individuals see themselves in relation to others [10]. Independent-self emphasizes the independence of the individual from society, placing personal goals and values above social relationships, while interdependent- self emphasizes the interdependence with the rest of society and a higher need for social identity [10]. In terms of attitudes towards celebrity endorsements, previous research has shown that consumers with independent self are less likely to like the presence of celebrity endorsements in advertising and may even have negative

attitudes, possibly due to their emphasis on autonomy, preferring advertisements that show the functions and performance of the product.

## 2.5. Research Gap

Although studies have examined how celebrity endorsements influence the purchase intention of consumers based on the SOR model, there have also been studies involving self-construal as a moderator in research models. However, in the field of new energy vehicle marketing, there needs to research on adding self-construal into the SOR model to study its moderating effect on the influence of expert spokespersons on consumers' purchase intentions. Therefore, this study proposes a hypothetical model. As shown in Figure 2, this model uses the expert endorser in the new energy vehicle advertising as the stimulus, which will indirectly affect the consumer's purchase intention through the consumer's perceived trust. Meanwhile, two types of self-construal will moderate the degree of perceived trust generated by expert spokespersons.

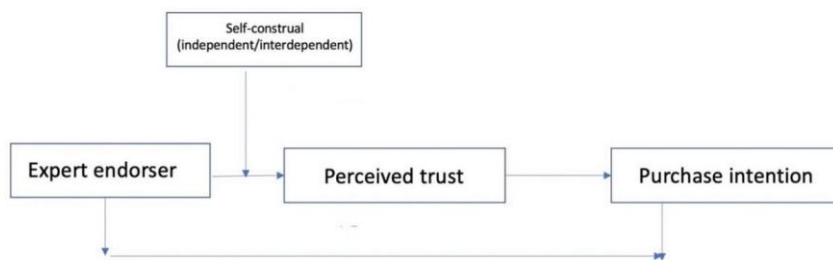


Figure 2: Hypothetical model based on the SOR model

## 3. The Mediate Effect of Perceived Trust

The perceived trust would mediate the effect of expert endorsers on purchase intention. Expert endorsements are mainly divided into two forms: expert endorsement advertisements and expert recommender on social media. First, expert endorsement advertising can convey a credible signal to consumers by emphasizing the identity of experts in the advertisement. According to the persuasive effect of information sources, experts with high trustworthiness and professional knowledge can be regarded as credible information sources that can make consumers form a positive brand attitude and enhance their brand trust [11]. For the expected recommender on social media, consumers will have a sense of trust in expert recommenders whom they are familiar with and transfer this trust to the brand. Expert recommendations in ins also confirm this point. When professional bloggers with high reputations make professional recommendations on products, it can enhance the trust of their fans in the product and increase their willingness to buy it [3]. This further confirms that perceived trust can mediate the relationship between expert endorsements and purchase willingness, in which the appearance of expert spokespersons in new energy advertisements would increase consumers' perceived trust and further enhance their purchase intention.

## 4. The Moderate Effect of Self-construal

Different self-construal would moderate the impact process of expert endorsements purchase willingness. Previous studies have confirmed that the appearance of expert endorsers can positively impact the purchase willingness of consumers. According to the persuasion effect of information sources, expert endorsers can be regarded as highly credible information sources by virtue of their identity and professional recommendation [11]. It can make consumers form a positive brand attitude and enhance their purchase willingness. However, due to the difference in self-construal, the

appearance of expert spokespersons in advertisements does not always positively impact consumers' purchase intention. According to previous studies, differences in consumers' self-construal will lead to differences in their attitudes toward brands and thus lead to different consumer behaviors [4]. Consumers with independent self would be less likely to like the presence of celebrity endorsements in advertising during their purchase process [4]. This response is mainly due to the higher level of self-efficacy of such kinds of consumers. According to the research, consumers with an independent self may have a higher level of self-efficacy, that is, the degree of confidence in themselves to achieve a specific goal independently [4,12]. As a result, they rely more on the information they search for independently and make decisions. In contrast, consumers with interdependent-self, due to their reliance on social cues, show more reliance and trust in the recommendation of others [4,12]. Finally, they have a stronger tendency to be impacted by expert endorsers. This demonstrates that although the emergence of expert endorser in new energy vehicles may increase consumers' purchase intentions, they are affected by different types of self-construal. Independent-self-dominant consumers may reduce their purchase intention due to the appearance of expert spokespersons in the advertisement, while dependent self-dominant consumers may increase their purchase intention.

## 5. Marketing Implications

The study of expert endorsers in new energy advertising would be helpful for precision marketing. Previous research has confirmed that the appearance of expert spokespersons in new energy vehicle advertisements will help increase consumers' purchase intention, which will prompt new energy vehicle brands to carefully choose trustworthy experts as brand spokespersons to enhance consumers' purchase intention. Research shows consumers with interdependent-self can respond more positively to expert endorsement advertisements than consumers with independent-self. However, in Chinese society dominated by collectivism, most consumers tend to be dominated by the interdependent self when making purchase choices [4]. Therefore, new energy vehicle brands should carefully select expert spokespersons who target consumers' trust in the Chinese market. Meanwhile, this study also suggests EV brands conduct comprehensive market research to dig out advertising elements that can inspire Chinese consumers' self-construal to improve advertising effectiveness further.

## 6. Conclusion

This study is based on the SOR model and adds self-construal to explore how the expert endorsers in the electric vehicle advertisement influence the purchase willingness of consumers and the moderating role of self-construal in the influence process. Research shows that the appearance of expert spokespersons in new energy vehicle advertisements will increase consumers' perceived trust, thereby increasing purchase intentions. However, due to the different types of self-construal, consumers who are dominated by the independent self may resist the new energy advertisements endorsed by experts and thus reduce their purchase intention, while consumers who are dominated by the interdependent self are the opposite. This study further extends the application of the SOR model in green marketing. It provides suggestions for the precise marketing of electric vehicle brands, such as inviting more reliable expert spokespersons and adding advertising elements that activate consumers' interdependent self-construal. However, the study also has some limitations, such as considering the impact of consumers' familiarity with products and the differences in consumers' preferences in different cultural backgrounds in a limited way. Therefore, a wider cultural background and a wider range of factors influencing consumers' purchase intentions will be considered in future research.

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