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# 1 Entertainer celebrity vs. celebrity chefs: The joint effect of celebrity endorsement and power distance 2 belief on restaurant consumers

3

## 4 Abstract

5 The phenomenon of celebrity restaurants is prevalent nowadays; however, not all such restaurants are  
6 equally favored by consumers. Culture may play an important role in explaining to what extent they  
7 could succeed or fail. As such, this study examines the joint effect of celebrity endorsement and  
8 individuals' power distance belief on consumers' attitudes and purchasing intention toward restaurants.  
9 A 2 (Celebrity types: entertainer celebrity vs. celebrity chef) x 2 (Power distance belief: high vs. low)  
10 scenario-based quasi-experiment was conducted to examine the interaction effect empirically. Results  
11 indicated that consumers with a low level of power distance belief showed a more positive attitude and  
12 a stronger intent to purchase toward celebrity chef-owned restaurants. On the other hand, consumers  
13 with a high level of power distance belief exhibited a more positive attitude and a stronger purchase  
14 intention toward restaurants owned by entertainer celebrities. Theoretical and managerial implications  
15 are discussed.

16 Keywords: Entertainer celebrity, celebrity chef, power distance belief, restaurants

17 Highlights (85 characteristics, including spaces):

18 Guests' power distance belief alters their reactions to celebrity-owned restaurants.

19 Guests with low power distance belief would favor celebrity chef-owned restaurants.

20 Guests with high power distance belief prefer entertainer celebrities' restaurants.

21

## 22 Introduction

23 In the hospitality industry, a particular type of celebrity, celebrity chefs, has become increasingly popular  
24 because of their master culinary skills and sometimes unique personalities. Many TV programs have  
25 contributed to the blast of the celebrity chef phenomenon as they featured culinary creativity and  
26 competition, podcasting to millions of audiences worldwide (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2020). A celebrity  
27 chef is "someone with a professional background who enjoys a certain element of recognition  
28 domestically and possibly globally, unconfined to the world of expensive restaurants" (Henderson, 2011,  
29 p.617). Such celebrity chefs can lead societal change in contemporary culture, influencing consumers'  
30 food habits (Stringfellow et al., 2013). In addition, celebrity chefs such as Gordon Ramsay and Wolfgang  
31 Puck have opened their own restaurants to capitalize on their fame and popularity. This is not surprising  
32 as entertainer celebrities, which refers to celebrities who are actors, actresses, singers, or models (Hsu &  
33 McDonald, 2002), such as Michael Jordan and Ryan Gosling, have expanded their territory from their  
34 area of expertise (e.g., sports and entertainment) into the restaurant business years ago. Interestingly,  
35 although both entertainer celebrities and celebrity chefs are exploring this option to capture their own  
36 value, some enjoyed great profits while others failed, implying that the fame of celebrities does not  
37 guarantee venture success (Teng et al., 2020). More research is needed to help understand the factors  
38 contributing to the success of celebrity-owned restaurants.

To date, scholarly work has investigated the operation strategies of celebrity-owned restaurants (Henderson, 2011; Jones, 2009) at the firm level; however, very few studies focused on consumers' reactions to celebrity-owned restaurants at the individual level (with a notable exception of Trivedi & Sama, 2021). Trivedi and Sama (2021) documented that in the context of celebrity-owned restaurants, brand love significantly mediated the effect of celebrity endorsement and perceived food quality on brand loyalty and e-WOM. Their finding contributed to this emerging stream of research by shedding light on the diverging perceptions and assessments among consumers. However, it remains unclear what factors impact the consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions toward celebrity-owned restaurants.

From the academic perspective, celebrities who open restaurants and promote the brand using their names aim to leverage the celebrity endorsement effect (e.g., Trivedi & Sama, 2021; Yang, 2018). According to the source models, source credibility is one of the key theoretical foundations for celebrity endorsement research (Schimmelpfennig & Hunt, 2020). People, in general, tend to perceive celebrities' endorsements as a reliable source of information (Zhang & Wei, 2021). In particular, such information sources can attract consumers based on the characteristics of celebrities, creating a level of credibility for celebrity-owned restaurants (Winterich et al., 2018). Schimmelpfennig and Hunt (2020) summarized the celebrity endorsement literature and found that different types of celebrities might influence consumers via distinct attributes (e.g., attractiveness and expertise). In her review, Yang (2018) also called for a closer examination of celebrity-owned restaurants, particularly the endorsement effects from different types of celebrity owners. In this study, we seek to disentangle such endorsement effects based on celebrity types. Adopting the categorization of McCollum-Spielman (1980), this study considers two types of celebrities, namely, entertainer celebrities (actors, models, as well as singers) and celebrity chefs. Compared to entertainer celebrities, celebrity chefs are well-known for their culinary expertise and a deeper engagement in restaurant operations (Yang, 2018). Hence, we posit that celebrity chefs and entertainer celebrities may possess diverse influences and power from their endorsement in the restaurant businesses.

Additionally, the literature suggests that the celebrity chef phenomenon is a reflection of contemporary popular culture (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2020); it symbolically manifests the blending of influential individuals, the power of media, market capitalism, and public fascination (Zopiatis & Melanthiou, 2019). Giousmpasoglou et al. (2020) encouraged more work to unfold the public's distinct perception of this phenomenon as it may be driven by cultural differences. Thus, our study adopts a cross-cultural approach to explore the potential impact generated by consumers' various levels of cultural value, which is power distance belief (PDB). PDB describes the level of perception of members in an organization or country on whether power is distributed unequally within such an organization or country (Hofstede, 1991; 2001). Individuals with a high level of PDB are more likely to accept orders from management or governance, whereas individuals with a low level of PDB prefer a more equal-power structure. Thus, consumers with a higher level of PDB are more likely to follow instructions from the more powerful individuals and engage in status consumption (Gao et al., 2016). Given the differences between entertainment celebrities and celebrity chefs, we maintain that consumers' level of PDB may jointly affect their attitudes and purchase intention toward the restaurants owned by celebrities.

To summarize, this study aims to explore the impact of PDB combined with the different types of celebrities on diners' choices. Specifically, this study uses a 2x2 quasi-experimental design to investigate

the impact of PDB on the relationship between restaurants owned by different celebrity types (e.g., entertainer celebrity-owned vs. celebrity chef-owned) and attitude as well as purchase intention towards these celebrity-owned restaurants. Such experimental design has been extensively used in consumer behavior research on perceptions and choices (e.g., Luo & Mattila, 2020; Zhang et al., 2019).

The findings of this study bridge the research gap in the prevalent phenomenon of celebrity restaurants and explain how consumers with diverse PDB levels respond to different celebrity restaurants. In doing so, this study makes the following contributions to the literature. First, in view of the growing popularity of celebrity-owned restaurants, our study contributes to the emerging stream of research on celebrity-owned restaurants by investigating why consumers are drawn to different kinds of celebrity-owned restaurants. Leveraging the sources model, we theorize that the type of celebrities plays a vital role in shaping consumers' perceptions and judgment, and we empirically demonstrate their diverging impacts on customers' attitudes and purchase intentions. Second, our research extends the theoretical explanation of the celebrity endorsement effect by integrating the concept of PDB in exploring the conditions under which some celebrity endorsements are more effective than others. We show that consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions are jointly influenced by the type of celebrities owning the restaurants and consumers' characteristics. In particular, high PDB customers prefer entertainer celebrity-owned restaurants whereas low PDB customers favor celebrity chef-owned restaurants due to the different sources of credibility associated with these two kinds of celebrities. Practical implications can be drawn from this research to help celebrities better manage their restaurant businesses and carefully consider opening restaurants in new locations with various PDB levels.

The below sections are structured as follows: we first review the important literature and develop our hypotheses via the theoretical lens of the sources model. Next, we describe our methodology and data analysis process. Finally, we report the results and conclude with implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

## Literature review

### 2.1. Entertainer celebrity vs. celebrity chef

Celebrity can be defined as "individuals who have achieved a significant level of fame that makes them well known in society" (Young & Pinsky, 2006, p. 464). Researchers have conducted extensive work on the role of celebrities via different lenses in areas such as advertising (Kamins, 1990), communication (Corner & Pels, 2003), and sociology (Alexander, 2010). Celebrities' popularity status can raise public awareness and serve as a credible source for consumers (Winterich et al., 2018). Their endorsement can help increase brand awareness, differentiate brand image, and enhance brand value (Spry et al., 2011). In particular, research has found that celebrity endorsers can attract a higher level of positive attitudes and greater purchase intentions than non-celebrity endorsers (e.g., Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019; Spry et al., 2011; Winterich et al., 2018).

Traditionally, celebrities are famous public figures, including athletes, models, movie stars, and singers (Hsu & McDonald, 2002). In recent years, the definition of a celebrity has been broadened into individuals who receive recognition from the public (Yang, 2018). In our study, we adopt the

categorization of McCollum-Spielman (1980) and divide celebrities into two groups, namely, entertainers, such as actors, models, as well as singers, and non-entertainers, such as athletes, politicians, and other professional public figures.

In terms of non-entertainer celebrities, a particular occupation group, chefs, has enjoyed growing recognition in recent years. They started to attract more public attention by starring TV programs, writing autobiographies, and promoting their social media accounts (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2020). These celebrity chefs change the public stereotypes about cooking in restaurants. They showcase the stories in an open kitchen concept, as, traditionally, kitchens are the backstage of the restaurants that the consumers do not see (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2020). In addition, with the push of social media, their celebrity image has rapidly spread to millions of consumers (Zopiatis & Melanthiou, 2019). More and more consumers perceive culinary arts and chefs as a profession differently because of the glamor of celebrity chefs (e.g., Leschziner, 2015; Zopiatis & Melanthiou, 2019). Chen et al. (2017) argued that celebrity chefs' mastery skills could serve as a symbolic signal for the product and service of the restaurants, provoking consumers' interest and excitement. Furthermore, the rapid rise of celebrity chefs and their success inspire youngsters in terms of their career choice since "professional cooking gained social status, and chefs' names became valuable capital for restaurants" (Leschziner, 2015, p.15).

In terms of entertainer celebrities, a growing number of them went beyond endorsement and opened their businesses as entrepreneurs in recent years (Hunter & Davidsson, 2007). Many of them, such as Justin Timberlake and Jay-Z, have chosen to open restaurants because of diversifying assets or expanding their personal branding (Rymajdo, 2019). Yet, unlike celebrity chefs who are equipped with culinary competency and expertise, entertainer celebrities may not possess sufficient knowledge of culinary arts or business practices. For example, Jennifer Lopez launched Madre's restaurant in 2002 and had to close it in 2008 due to poor performance (Teng et al., 2020). Britney Spears invested in the Cajun restaurant Nyla but quickly backed out because of inadequate funding and mismanagement (Yang, 2018). These failed ventures indicate that popularity does not guarantee business success.

Although both entertainer celebrities and celebrity chefs consider restaurant business attractive to capture their own value (monetize their fame and popularity), they approach this business differently. The literature suggests two major distinctions, due to differences in the areas of expertise and available resources, between celebrity chefs and entertainer celebrity owned restaurants.

First, most celebrity chefs have worked in the upscale culinary landscape such as luxury hotels or fine-dining restaurants that are Michelin-starred (Jones, 2009). The extensive training and experience in fine-dining, in turn, enable celebrity chefs to improve the food quality and services in their extravagant offerings (Henderson, 2011), which often cannot be provided by entertainer celebrity-owned restaurants. Second, celebrities' involvement and relationships with the business vary. Yang (2018) has pointed out that compared to entertainer celebrities, celebrity chefs are known for their involvement in restaurant operations. Based on Teng et al. (2020)'s classification of the roles that celebrities can play in their business ventures, we maintain that celebrity chefs tend to assume the role of entrepreneurs in the restaurant business, which refers to those who are known for their active involvement in owning and running a venture. As for entertainer celebrities, they prefer the role of celebrity executives or celebrity investors, who tend to use their names for restaurant promotion rather than personally supervising or being involved in management.

From an academic perspective, only limited attention has been paid to exploring the interesting phenomenon of celebrity-owned restaurants. Chen et al. (2017) examined whether celebrity chef endorsement (no ownership) can encourage consumers' willingness to pay/tip more and repurchase behaviors. In addition, Trivedi and Sama (2021) investigated the effect of celebrity endorsements on brand love, brand loyalty, and e-WOM. However, to our best knowledge, the examination of different types of celebrity endorsement in the hospitality field is largely missing, while the phenomenon of various types of celebrities investing in the restaurant industry has become prevalent. It calls for more scholarly work in this vein, especially on the differential impact of the types of celebrities who own the restaurants (i.e., entertainer celebrity-owned vs. celebrity chef-owned) on consumer attitude and purchase intention toward their restaurants.

## 2.2. Power distance belief (PDB)

Cross-cultural studies in the hospitality context have gained much attention in recent years (e.g., Lee, 2015; Leon, 2019; Luo & Mattila, 2020). Among them, Hofstede's typology of cultures is widely acknowledged as a key framework for capturing cultural influence (Gao et al., 2018; Mariani & Predvoditeleva, 2019; Su et al., 2018). Yet, unlike other dimensions such as individualism vs. collectivism (Han et al., 2017; Magnini, 2010), the role of PDB in shaping consumer behavior is relatively under-investigated. Power distance belief (PDB) can be defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations in a culture expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede 1991, 2001; Oyserman, 2006). What truly distinguishes high PDB from low PDB is not the actual degree of power disparity people experience but how people perceive power disparity (Gao et al., 2016). While most researchers examined PDB at the country level, prior studies suggest that PDB should be considered at the individual level as well (e.g., Winterich et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2010) because there may be some heterogeneity among people from different cultural backgrounds.

As Li (2014) indicated, examining cultural differences is pertinent because the hospitality and travel industry is experiencing a significant shift from a Western-dominant focus to a more internationalized focus. The cross-culture variation acts not only as the motive of tourism activities but also as the source of some challenges to practitioners for a number of reasons. First of all, consumer behavior is culturally bound; for example, prior research has shown that culture can influence consumers' evaluation of hotel service due to their diversified needs and expectations (Chen et al., 2012). The findings of Furrer et al. (2000) echoed this view, which indicated that customers' perceived priority of the dimensions of the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman et al., 1988) varied depending on their PDB. Therefore, practitioners must understand consumers' various needs and desires. Second, customers' cultural background affects their uncivil behaviors, which may lead to negative consequences for employees, such as employee burnout, revenge intention, and incivility toward coworkers (Wang et al., 2021). This poses another challenge that managers face in staff recruitment, training, and supervising their teams. Last but not least, cultural variation also exists within the domestic market. As Hofstede et al. (2010) pointed out, it is not surprising to expect countries such as China (northern vs. southern region), Switzerland (four cultural regions of German, French, Italian and Romansh), and Germany (historically the Federal Republic of Germany vs. the German Democratic Republic) to have large cultural variations (including PDB) within the border due to geographic barriers or historical reasons. Therefore, investigating PDB at the individual level will provide significant managerial insights for hospitality practitioners, regardless of their target markets.

Prior research suggests that people from high PDB cultures value authority and compliance in societal activities, while their counterparts emphasize the independence and competence of individuals (Leon, 2019; Mariani & Predvoditeleva, 2019). Hence, customers with high PDB are more willing to comply with instructions or recommendations from people with higher social status or prestige, such as celebrities (Hofstede, 2001). Winterich et al. (2018) found that PDB significantly impacts the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements on consumers' attitudes toward the advertisement and the brand. In a culture of high PDB, consumers consider celebrities to be more credible and trustworthy subjectively. This result resonated with Biswas et al. (2009), which summarized that when recalling a celebrity, consumers with high PDB rely on the celebrity's perceived status and glamor, while consumers with low PDB focus more on the expertise of this celebrity.

Another key aspect of PDB's influence on consumer behavior lies in status consumption. Findings from prior literature consistently demonstrate that high PDB will lead to more status consumption (e.g., Gao et al., 2016; Kim & Zhang, 2014; Wang et al., 2020). To this point, Hofstede (2001) noted that people defer to, even desire, and actively reinforce a social hierarchy in a high PDB culture. This is because social status and corresponding superiority can only be demonstrated when everyone is in their rightful place (Winterich & Zhang, 2014). Consequently, consumers with high PDB prefer status consumption (such as purchasing luxury brands and global brands) to maintain their social positions/self-image and showcase social status (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2011). More recent evidence from Wang et al. (2020) further confirmed that high PDB contexts promote status-seeking behavior and motivate people to buy national brands because, compared to private-label brands, national brands are often viewed as status symbols. Given the consumption pattern in celebrity-owned restaurants, it is worthwhile to examine how PDB impacts consumer behavior under the influence of different celebrity endorsements.

### 3. Hypothesis development

In the present research, we propose that consumers' attitudinal and behavioral responses toward a celebrity-owned restaurant vary depending on the celebrity type. From the consumers' perspective, opening restaurants is a popular way for celebrities to capitalize on their fame and influence; therefore, celebrities naturally use their personal reputation to endorse their business (Kim et al., 2014). Previous research has found that restaurant ownership impacts how consumers make purchase decisions (Lin et al., 2020). In the literature of celebrity endorsement, the sources model has been widely used to explain the mechanism of endorser effectiveness (e.g., Erdogan, 1999; Gilal et al., 2020; Ohanian, 1990). The model suggests three main components (i.e., attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) that jointly influence consumers' information processing and internalization of the endorsers' credibility. Source credibility refers to "whether the source appears to possess expertise that is relevant to the topic and can be trusted to give an objective opinion" (Winterich et al., 2018, p. 72). A powerful endorsement must be credible so as to embellish consumers' perception toward the product and further influence their purchase decision (Goldsmith et al., 2000; Ohanian, 1990). Attractiveness depicts the public's judgments of the celebrity endorser's physical appearance, such as body figures and the beauty of the face. Expertise captures the extent to which a celebrity endorser is perceived to be a source of valid assertions. Lastly, trustworthiness refers to an endorser's honesty, integrity, and believability (Gilal et al., 2020).

Prior literature suggests that repeated coverage in the media and appealing outward appearance both significantly contribute to the perceived attractiveness (e.g., McGuire, 1969). For entertainer celebrities,

1 literature suggested that there has been an “aesthetic essentialism” (Alexander, 2010, p. 300) involved  
2 in the mass audience’s perceptions of these celebrities. Similarly, Hollander (2010, p. 389) pointed out  
3 that for celebrities such as movie stars, singers, and supermodels, dedicated looks and appearances are  
4 considered important “trademarks” to help them stand out from the crowd. Essentially, an entertainer  
5 celebrity’s status depends on many factors such as wide publicity, high egomania, and some eye-  
6 catching behaviors (Alexander, 2010). On the contrary, when it comes to celebrity chefs, the assessment  
7 of these celebrity chefs’ achievements still closely hinges on their professional training and expertise  
8 despite their popularity and fame (Henderson, 2011). They might receive attention worldwide and gain  
9 commercial success and financial power among their followers (Zopiatis & Melanthiou, 2019), but the  
10 public would not expect them as attractive as entertainer celebrities. Therefore, compared to celebrity  
11 chefs, entertainer celebrities tend to be perceived as more appealing by a broad customer base.

12 On the other hand, in the context of the restaurant business, celebrity chefs are undoubtedly more  
13 professional and possess better culinary expertise. Their profession requires “the creativity, mastery and  
14 (physical and mental) hardiness” in food preparation (Zopiatis & Melanthiou, 2019, p. 539); instead,  
15 entertainer celebrities lack such craftsmanship. Subsequently, on average, celebrity chefs outperform  
16 entertainer celebrities in the domain of expertise. As for trustworthiness, scholars have found that this  
17 factor is closely related to both expertise and attractiveness. Prior studies showed that celebrities’  
18 expertise is positively associated with their perceived trustworthiness (e.g., Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018);  
19 meanwhile, the positive link between attractiveness and trustworthiness also received empirical support  
20 (Grammer et al., 2003; Wilson & Eckel, 2006). In this regard, the relative impact of celebrities’  
21 trustworthiness on their credibility may need to be interpreted collectively with the other two  
22 components.

23 Combining with the effect of consumers’ PDB on their attitude formation and decision making, we posit  
24 that people with various levels of PDB would weigh each component differently based on their cultural  
25 differences. High-PDB consumers respect authorities and value opinions from those with high social  
26 status (Winterich et al., 2018). As such, they naturally assume that authorities are more informative and  
27 believable. In our context, High-PDB consumers would then see entertainer celebrities as more  
28 trustworthy given their greater glamor and fame. On the contrary, low-PDB consumers favor and trust  
29 celebrities with expertise, so they tend to take full consideration of the factors such as endorsers’  
30 product-related knowledge and their achievement (Paek, 2005); this will make them more likely to think  
31 celebrity chefs are trustworthy. Taken together, high-PDB consumers will attribute greater credibility to  
32 entertainer celebrities and exhibit a more positive attitude toward the restaurants they own. Low-PDB  
33 consumers instead would favor celebrity chef-owned restaurants because of chefs’ expertise and  
34 perceived trustworthiness.

35 In addition, consumers who choose to dine in a celebrity (or celebrity chef)-owned restaurant do not  
36 merely seek the utilitarian value from this dining experience; instead, the hedonic and social value may  
37 also be the underpinning factors of their decisions (Chen et al., 2017). In fact, dining in a celebrity-  
38 owned restaurant is a good way to signal higher social status because the availability of such  
39 consumption opportunities is limited, and only people in the higher social hierarchy would possess the  
40 related resources (either money, time, or even social connections) to make reservations (Hyman, 2008).  
41 As indicated in prior research (e.g., Kim & Zhang, 2014), consumers with high PDB prefer activities that  
42 could elevate their perceived social status. Thus, it is reasonable to expect their dining preference in  
43 restaurants that can further enhance their prestige and premium status. Between entertainer celebrity-

owned restaurants and celebrity chef-owned restaurants, the former is attached to an endorser that enjoys greater popularity, ensuring that other consumers could correctly interpret this status signal and have corresponding reactions. This is important because the focal consumers' status consumption behavior will be demotivated when other people fail to successfully identify the status signal (Gao et al., 2016). On the other hand, low-PDB consumers value independent thinking and uniqueness; subsequently, their choices of restaurants are not driven by status consumption but rather their evaluation of the food quality and dining experience (Biswas et al., 2009). Furthermore, to avoid being considered as "follow suit", they might intentionally avoid entertainer celebrity-owned restaurants.

In sum, we propose that:

There is a significant interaction effect between Celebrity Type and Power Distance Belief (PDB) such that,

H1. Individuals with a lower level of PDB will have a more positive attitude and a stronger purchase intention towards celebrity chef-owned restaurants (vs. entertainer celebrity-owned restaurants).

H2. Individuals with a higher level of PDB will have a more positive attitude and a stronger purchase intention towards entertainer celebrity-owned restaurants (vs. celebrity chef-owned restaurants).

#### 4. Method

##### 4.1. Research design

The present research adopted a 2 (Celebrity Type: Entertainer Celebrity vs. Celebrity chef) x 2 (PDB: High vs. Low) quasi-experimental design with Celebrity Type being manipulated and PDB being measured. To manipulate Celebrity Type, participants in the Entertainer Celebrity condition read that: "You were surfing on the Internet one day just for fun and saw a social media post saying that there was a new restaurant just opened up in a major city near where you live. One of the owners of the new restaurant is a popular singer (thinking about Bruno Mars or Justin Bieber as an example). You browsed through some photos of the new restaurant on social media. It has a spacious dining area with couches and shared tables, a casual bar, and big windows with the view of a golf course. The aesthetic is modern, and the meals seem to be perfectly plated." On the other hand, participants in the Celebrity chef condition read that: "You were surfing on the Internet one day just for fun and saw a social media post saying that there was a new restaurant just opened up in a major city near where you live. One of the owners of the new restaurant is a celebrity chef (thinking about Gordon Ramsay or Wolfgang Puck as an example). You browsed through some photos of the new restaurant on social media. It has a spacious dining area with couches and shared tables, a casual bar, and big windows with the view of a golf course. The aesthetic is modern, and the meals seem to be perfectly plated." The scenarios were developed based on news articles describing entertainer celebrity and celebrity chef-owned restaurants.

##### 4.2. Measurement scales

Power Distance Belief, as one of the independent variables, was measured via a 5-item scale adapted from Yoo et al. (2011) (e.g., "People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions"; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .897$ ). Two dependent variables were included in the survey. First of all, attitude towards the restaurant was measured via a 3-item scale adapted from Karmarkar



and Tormala (2010) (i.e., "positive-negative", "bad-good", and "unfavorable-favorable"; Cronbach's  $\alpha$  = .763). The other dependent variable, purchase intention, was measured via 4 items adapted from Zhang et al. (2019) (e.g., "I am interested in visiting this restaurant"; Cronbach's  $\alpha$  = .805). The survey also contained two attention check questions. Participants were asked to select "Strongly disagree" as the response to one of the questions. The other one asked them to select "Neither agree nor disagree". Participants' frequency of dining out before the COVID-19 pandemic was measured and employed as a control variable, and so was the extent to which COVID-19 has influenced the decisions they indicated in the survey. Last but not least, there were two realism check questions (e.g., "To what extent is the description of the situation in the scenario realistic?";  $r = .52$ ,  $p < .01$ ). All variables were measured by using a 7-point Likert scale.

#### 4.3. Sample

Amazon Mechanical Turk was used for data collection. A total of 350 individuals in the United States participated in the survey. After removing the incomplete surveys as well as the ones who failed the attention check questions, a sample of 204 general consumers was retained for this study. The majority of the participants were male (65.2%). More than half of them were between 26 to 40 years old (62.2%), followed by the 41-60 age range (27.5%). Most participants held a Bachelor's degree (65.6%), and their annual household income fell into the category of \$50,000 to \$100,000 (51.5%), followed by the "20,000 to \$50,000" bracket (30.9%). Regarding their ethnicity, 63.2% of the participants were Caucasian (See Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic information

Variables	Frequency	%	Variables	Frequency	%
Gender			Education		
Male	133	65.2	High school or less	1	.5
Female	71	34.8	Associate degree	3	1.5
Others	0	0	Bachelor's degree	134	65.6
			Master's degree	63	30.9
Age			Doctoral degree	3	1.5
Under 18	0	0	Other	0	0
18-25	15	7.4			
26-40	127	62.2	Annual Household Income		
41-60	56	27.5	Less than \$20k	6	2.9
Above 60	6	2.9	\$20k to \$50k	63	30.9
			\$50,001 to \$100k	105	51.5
Ethnicity			More than 100k	30	14.7

Asian	15	7.4	Marital Status			
African American	20	9.8				
Caucasian	129	63.2		Single	29	14.2
Hispanic	19	9.3		Married	175	85.8
Native American	21	10.3		Other	0	0
Pacific Islander	0	0				
Other	0	0				

## 5. Results and discussion

### 5.1. Manipulation check

In order to check the manipulation of Celebrity Type, participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with two statements: (1) "One of the owners of the new restaurant you just read in the scenario was a singer", and (2) "One of the owners of the new restaurant you just read in the scenario was a celebrity chef". Results showed that participants in the Entertainer Celebrity condition responded to the first statement more positively ( $M_{\text{Entertainer celebrity}} = 5.73$ ,  $M_{\text{Celebrity chef}} = 4.57$ ,  $t = 5.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ) when their counterparts in the Celebrity Chef condition responded more positively to the second statement ( $M_{\text{Entertainer celebrity}} = 4.82$ ,  $M_{\text{Celebrity Chef}} = 5.82$ ,  $t = -4.57$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Thus, the manipulation of Celebrity Type was successful. In terms of the realism check, participants indicated that the scenario was realistic ( $M = 5.63$ ,  $SD = .91$ ).

### 5.2. Hypotheses testing

The objective of this study is to investigate how consumers with various levels of PDB would react to the restaurants owned by different types of celebrities. To test this interaction effect, Hayes' PROCESS model (Model 1) was used with the recommended bias-corrected bootstrapping technique (Number of bootstrap samples = 5,000). Results indicated that the interaction effect was significant on Attitudes ( $b = .25$ ,  $t = 2.73$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Purchase Intention ( $b = .34$ ,  $t = 4.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Specifically, our results indicated that consistent with H1, participants with a lower level of PDB showed a more positive attitude and a stronger intent to purchase toward celebrity chef-owned restaurants (Attitudes:  $b = -.38$ ,  $t = -2.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Purchase Intention:  $b = -.62$ ,  $t = -4.01$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In addition, for H2, the findings in this study established that participants with a higher level of PDB exhibited a more positive attitude and a stronger purchase intention toward entertainer celebrity-owned restaurants (Attitudes:  $b = .30$ ,  $t = 1.71$ ,  $p = .08$ , marginally significant; Purchase Intention:  $b = .29$ ,  $t = 1.88$ ,  $p = .06$ , marginally significant). Thus, H1 was supported whereas H2 was partially supported (see Figure 1-2). This finding confirmed that customers' cultural background plays a notable role in their preference regarding different types of celebrity-owned restaurants. Additionally, a sensitivity test was conducted by incorporating additional control variables (i.e., gender, age, ethnicity, attitudes toward celebrity chefs, attitudes toward entertainer celebrity/celebrity chef-owned restaurants, familiarity with entertainer celebrity/celebrity chef-owned

restaurants). Results remained consistent such that the interaction effect was still significant on Attitudes ( $b=.13$ ,  $t=2.53$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and Purchase Intention ( $b=.24$ ,  $t=3.88$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

Figure 1. The interaction effect of celebrity types and PDB on consumer attitudes toward a restaurant.

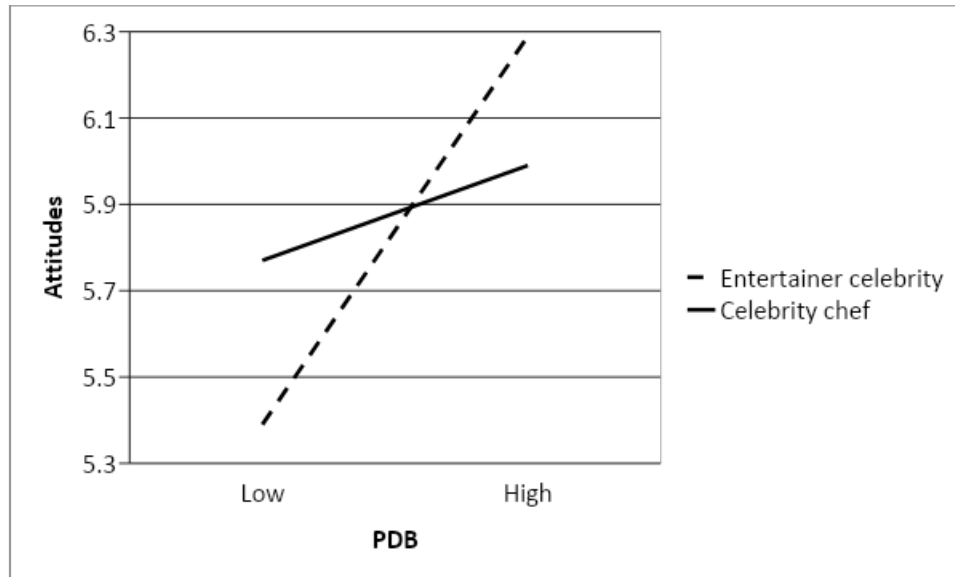
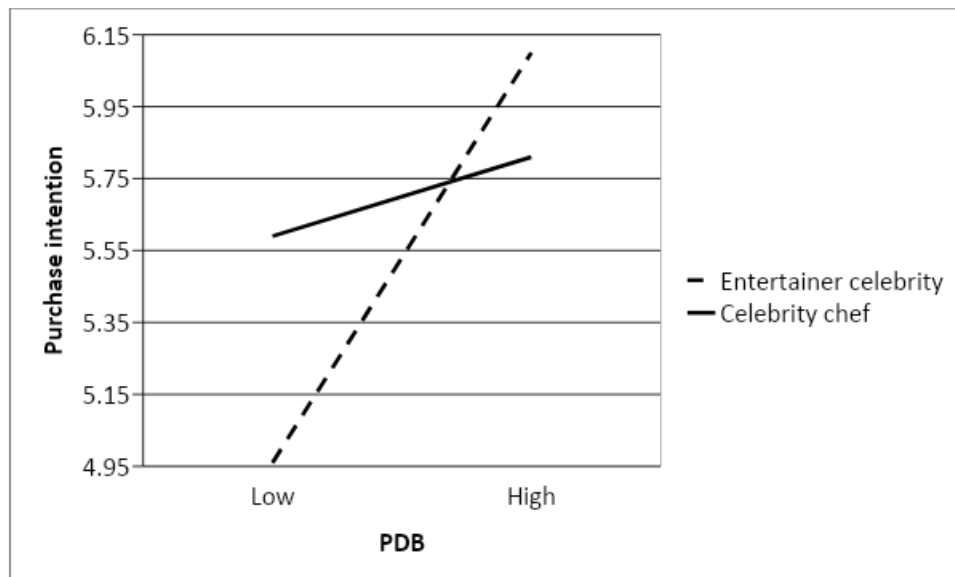


Figure 2. The interaction effect of celebrity types and PDB on consumers' purchase intention towards a restaurant.



## 6. Theoretical contributions

Synthesizing extant literature on celebrity endorsement and power distance belief within hospitality management research, our study makes the following theoretical contributions. First, this study is an opening step to the emerging research stream of celebrity-owned restaurants. The past decade has witnessed an increasing number of celebrity-owned ventures, ranging from skincare, outfits, to restaurants and bars. In spite of the ubiquitous celebrity-owned restaurants, research in this domain is still in its infancy. Although the role of the chef has been highlighted in prior work (e.g., Henderson, 2011; Morgan & Edwards, 2011), understanding of the various factors that could influence consumers' perception and judgment associated with celebrity-owned restaurants remains limited. Specifically, studies that focus on the attributes that shape consumers' attitudinal and behavioral responses toward these ventures are relatively scant. Against this backdrop, we theorize that celebrity restaurants can be categorized based on a key attribute: the type of celebrities who own the restaurant (i.e., entertainer celebrity vs. celebrity chef). This key attribute underscores consumers' psychological processes in arriving at diverging perceptions of celebrity-owned restaurants. Empirical findings of this research demonstrate the differential effects of the two types of celebrities owning restaurants on customers' attitudes and purchase intentions. Thus, our study contributes to the literature by offering a detailed account of why and how consumers are drawn to different kinds of celebrity-owned restaurants.

Second, this research extends the theoretical explanation of the celebrity endorsement effect (e.g., Gilal et al., 2020; Winterich et al., 2018) by providing novel insights into the diverging effect of different types of celebrity endorsers on consumers' reactions. Prior research has shown that celebrity endorsers, in general, can provide a brand or a firm with various benefits compared to non-celebrities (for a review, please see Yang, 2018). However, it was unclear whether the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements varied across celebrities of different kinds. The conditions under which some celebrities' endorsements are more effective than others remain underexplored. Drawing on the sources model, we theorize that consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions alter depending on the type of celebrities in conjunction with consumers' characteristics. We enrich the theoretical interpretation by integrating the concept of PDB (Hofstede, 2001; Zhang et al., 2010) into our model and then offer a novel perspective by arguing that consumers' cultural orientation plays a role in their judgment toward different celebrity endorsers. Empirical findings of this study support the notion that the attributes of celebrities and consumers' cultural orientation jointly shape consumers' preferences. Taking restaurants as our setting, we find that customers with higher PDB favor entertainer celebrity-owned restaurants as they show a more positive attitude and a stronger purchase intention toward these restaurants because they attribute greater credibility to entertainer celebrities.

On the other hand, we find that low-PDB consumers prefer celebrity chef-owned restaurants more than entertainer celebrity-owned restaurants because they attribute greater expertise and higher trustworthiness in restaurant operations associated with celebrity chef-owned restaurants. By explicating how consumers' reactions toward different kinds of celebrity-owned restaurants are influenced by the levels of their PDB, we unpack the distinct mechanisms through which different aspects of celebrity endorsement shape consumers' assessment of a business. Our finding also sheds new light on the literature by expanding the understanding of the effects of PDB on consumption behavior. Recent research has increasingly recognized the pivotal role of individuals' PDB in shaping their preferences for different brands or products (Song et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). Our study advances this growing research by deepening the understanding of the role of individuals' PDB in determining the influence of celebrity endorsement on consumers' decision-making.

## 7. Managerial implications

Our study offers several implications for managerial practices. First, marketers and managers have long been using celebrities to leverage their economic value and promote product awareness. However, recent studies have increasingly shown that the effectiveness of the utilization of celebrity endorsement can vary across different cultures. By exploring the interactive effects of celebrity endorsements and individuals' PDB on their attitudes and purchase intention, we show that not all celebrities' restaurants are equally favored by consumers such that consumers with diverging levels of PDB are attracted to restaurants owned by different types of celebrities. Specifically, for entertainer celebrities who intend to be involved in the restaurant business, this research may provide some inspiration for their future business footprint. These celebrities of fame and social status are more attractive to high PDB consumers; hence, high PDB consumers should be considered target customers when they launch the new business. Given the close relationship between high PDB and status consumption, restaurant managers should emphasize the social value of the dining experience in these entertainer celebrity-owned restaurants to promote their restaurants to those consumers with high PDB. For example, by leveraging social media platforms, they could portray customers' patronage as an opportunity to connect with entertainer celebrities and also a great way to display their privilege and social identity.

On the other hand, celebrity chefs, as they have enjoyed growing attention and become a celebrity group in recent years, changed public opinion about cooking in restaurants and showcased their culinary skills and expertise to more consumers with the rise of social media. As we discussed above, one of their core competitive advantages is the chef's expertise in food, cooking, and restaurant operation. Therefore, when celebrity chefs proliferate their business, they should keep an eye on the balance between the rapid expansion of their restaurants and the "authenticity" of their value proposition. Specifically, they should target consumers with low PDB by emphasizing restaurants' commitment to dedicated food quality and pursuit of the exquisite dining experience. Meanwhile, restaurants' media communication team should constantly highlight the chef's important role in monitoring the menu design and daily operations of those restaurants. This also helps professionally present their culinary philosophy while fostering an engaging relationship with the low PDB audience to generate broader interest.

Finally, given that many celebrity-owned restaurants are joint ventures by celebrities and other investing partners (Henderson, 2011), investors (as important stakeholders in this context) need to make a more prudent decision in partnering with the right celebrities. Considering the impact of different types of celebrities on the restaurant business, investors should be advised to carefully gauge the expectations and challenges in anticipation of working with entertainer celebrities or celebrity chefs, since two groups affect customers' preferences via different psychological mechanisms and may entail distinct challenges. Further, investors should take into account the cultural values of restaurant customers and leverage celebrities' corresponding attributes.

## 8. Limitations and future research directions

There are a few limitations of the current research that need to be acknowledged. First of all, this study employed an experimental design. While this method is appropriate for examining the causal effects, future research should conduct a field study to explore the different effects of celebrity types and cultural orientations. Second, this research only focused on two types of celebrities (entertainer celebrities and celebrity chefs) while ignoring other types of celebrities that could be equally influential. For example, Zhang et al. (2019) examined microcelebrity (i.e., social media influencers) and found that microcelebrities have a positive impact on hotel guests as well, similar to traditional celebrities. Therefore, future research should consider other types of celebrities and their effects in the context of celebrity-owned restaurants. Third, this study approached this phenomenon from a cultural perspective, which focuses on the role that PDB is playing in altering customers' attitudes as well as their purchase intention. Instead, it would be interesting to identify other potential motives or underlying mechanisms that explain customers' purchase intention to purchase or consume on top of our findings. Last but not least, Hofstede (1991, 2001) proposed multiple cultural dimensions while this research only examined the effect of individuals' power distance belief. Future research should explore other cultural dimensions and their joint effects with celebrity endorsement. Another potential research stream would be to investigate the effect of celebrity type and cultural orientations in multiple countries (e.g., US vs. China) to enhance the generalizability of the present research.

## 9. Conclusion

Celebrity restaurants have become increasingly prevalent in recent years. Other than entertainer celebrities such as Michael Jordan and Justin Timberlake who ventured into the restaurant business from their area of expertise; a growing number of celebrity chefs with public media exposure are also exploring the option of opening restaurants to capitalize on their fame and popularity. Although research in celebrity-owned restaurants is emerging, we still lack an understanding of the factors that could explain to what extent celebrity-owned restaurants may succeed or not. Furthermore, previous literature has called for more work to investigate the celebrity chef phenomenon through a cross-cultural approach, as it is indeed reflecting consumer preferences among diverse cultures. To address these gaps, this study aims to explore the impact of PDB combined with the two types of celebrities (i.e., entertainer celebrities and celebrities chefs) on diners' choices. We began with questions to unpack the distinct mechanisms through which attributes could shape consumers' perception and judgment associated with celebrity-owned restaurants. Anchored in the concept of PDB and the source model in celebrity endorsement literature, this study employed a 2 (PDB: High vs. Low) x 2 (Celebrity Type: Entertainer Celebrity vs. Celebrity chef) quasi-experimental design and surveyed 350 consumers to examine the interaction effect of celebrity endorsement and individuals' PDB on their attitudes and purchasing intention toward restaurants. As a result of the data analysis, our study found that consumers with a high level of PDB exhibited a more positive attitude and a stronger purchase intention toward restaurants owned by entertainer celebrities. Conversely, consumers with a low level of PDB showed a more positive attitude and a stronger intent to purchase toward celebrity chef-owned restaurants. This study offers an explanation of why and how consumers of different cultural orientations are drawn to different kinds of celebrity-owned restaurants, which contributes cross-cultural elements to celebrity endorsement literature. Our findings provide valuable insights for marketers and managers to effectively promote greater interest from their target consumers, and also

- 1 help guide potential investors and other stakeholders with some inspiration for their future business
- 2 footprints.

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