



The Role of Celebrity Endorsement and Brand Awareness in Forming Purchase Intention: The Influence of Brand Image as an Intervening Variable

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Awareness, Purchase Intention, Brand Image

Received: 19 October

Revised: 24 November

Accepted: 22 December

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the influence of celebrity endorsement and brand awareness on consumers' purchase intentions, with brand image acting as a mediating variable. The importance of this research stems from addressing a gap identified in existing literature. A quantitative approach was employed, utilizing purposive sampling as the non-probability technique for participant selection. Data were collected through surveys using a 5-point Likert scale, and the final sample included 385 respondents. The data analysis was conducted with the SmartPLS (Partial Least Squares) method. The results indicate that both celebrity endorsement and brand awareness positively and significantly affect purchase intention. Additionally, both factors also positively influence brand image. However, brand image does not act as a mediator between celebrity endorsement, brand awareness, and purchase intention, contrary to the initial hypothesis

INTRODUCTION

Beauty is universally regarded as a highly valued and admired trait, transcending gender, age, and cultural background. Individuals with aesthetically pleasing facial features and healthy skin often become the focal point of attention, prompting others to turn to cosmetics as a means to enhance their own physical appeal. Over the years, Indonesia has experienced substantial growth in the beauty product sector, marking significant changes in the marketplace. The growing variety of beauty products has led to heightened competition, requiring companies to constantly evaluate and comprehend consumer preferences in order to build a strong brand image that resonates with their target market. The pursuit of beauty has become an essential desire for individuals of all genders, providing a lucrative avenue for the beauty industry to expand and thrive.

A key element of consumer behavior is purchase intention, which reflects a person's willingness or plan to buy a specific product or service. Purchase intention emerges when consumers are influenced by factors such as product quality, established standards, and the information provided about the product. In this context, celebrity endorsement and brand awareness have become pivotal strategies for companies aiming to communicate persuasive messages to consumers. Purchase intention represents the stage at which consumers evaluate various brands within their consideration set, ultimately making a purchasing decision based on their preferences and considerations (Suyono et al., 2012).

Before engaging in celebrity endorsements, it is essential for companies to thoughtfully choose the right celebrities or influencers to promote their products. The selection of a fitting celebrity endorser can greatly improve a company's capacity to communicate key product information effectively. Celebrities serving as endorsers are typically public figures, such as artists or individuals with a substantial fan base and millions of social media followers. Ramlawati and Lusyana (2020) define celebrity endorsement as the use of well-known individuals, including artists, entertainers, bloggers, vloggers, influencers, and athletes, who have gained public recognition due to their accomplishments in their respective fields. When a celebrity endorsement is executed effectively, it has the potential to capture attention, heighten brand awareness, and generate interest among the celebrity's followers.

Brand awareness, a fundamental concept in marketing, refers to consumers' ability to recognize or recall a brand, especially regarding products they may have previously purchased or are considering purchasing. According to Firmansyah (2018), brand awareness refers to the percentage of consumers who can recognize and recall a particular brand. The greater the degree of brand awareness, the more likely it is that the brand will stay top-of-mind for consumers, thereby increasing its likelihood of being chosen for purchase.

As competition among businesses intensifies, especially in markets with numerous similar offerings, companies must adopt proactive strategies to maintain their market share. Another critical factor influencing consumer behavior and business success is brand image. According to Kotler et al. (2015), a brand is an entity represented by a name, logo, symbol, color scheme, or a

combination of these elements, which distinguishes a product or service in the marketplace. Thus, brand image is essential in shaping consumer satisfaction and guiding their purchasing choices.

A notable example of a rapidly growing beauty brand in Indonesia is Scarlett Whitening, which has gained substantial popularity among both teenagers and adults. Founded in 2017 by Felicya Angelista, Scarlett Whitening is a locally developed beauty and skincare brand that has made a significant impact in the Indonesian market. The brand has earned official registration from Indonesia's National Agency of Drug and Food Control (BPOM) and continues to establish itself as a prominent player among local beauty care brands in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to the stage in the consumer decision-making process in which individuals develop preferences for specific brands within a particular product category, eventually leading to the selection and acquisition of the brand they favor. It is the cognitive process that consumers undergo when determining whether or not to purchase a product or service, taking into account various factors and influences. Purchase intention, as explained by Kotler and Keller (2016), is a reflection of consumer behavior, capturing both emotional and rational reactions to a product, which influences their likelihood of acquiring it. Priansa (2017) further defines it as a consumer's decision or intention to buy a specific product, including aspects such as the amount desired and the expected timing of the purchase. This stage is critical as it represents the transition from product awareness to the actual decision to make a purchase, influenced by multiple psychological, social, and contextual factors.

Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity endorsement is a promotional tactic where well-known figures from various domains, such as entertainment, sports, or fashion, are hired to represent and promote a brand, leveraging their public recognition and influence. These individuals are often selected due to their widespread recognition and influence, which can significantly enhance the effectiveness of advertising campaigns. Kotler and Keller (2016) define celebrity endorsement as the practice of featuring a well-known or attractive personality as the face of a brand or product, aiming to capture the attention of a broader audience and ensuring the message is memorable. According to Ramlawati and Lusyana (2020), celebrity endorsement extends beyond traditional entertainers to include social media influencers, bloggers, vloggers, and athletes who have gained substantial followings due to their success and public visibility. In essence, a celebrity endorser is a public figure whose reputation and accomplishments are leveraged to promote a product, creating an emotional connection between the consumer and the brand through their association.

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is a valuable element in a brand (Bahi et al., 2020). Brand awareness is the degree to which consumers can identify or remember a brand within a particular product category. The more familiar consumers are with a brand, the higher the likelihood that it will influence their buying decisions. According to Duriyanto et al. (2017), brand awareness is the ability of individuals to recognize or recall a brand within a specific product category. Consumers often associate well-established brands with reliability, business stability, and consistent quality, which enhances trust in the product. This recognition leads to a preference for purchasing familiar brands, as they provide a sense of security and reduce perceived risks associated with the product's use. Consequently, brand awareness is vital in influencing consumer trust and buying decisions, as it diminishes doubt and encourages loyalty toward the brand.

Brand Image

Brand image is created when a product successfully establishes a distinct and strong positioning in the minds of consumers; the more effectively a brand is positioned, the more robust its image becomes. A positive reputation for a company automatically extends to its products, thereby enhancing the perception of its brand. Kotler and Keller (2016) define brand image as the collection of perceptions and associations that consumers hold about a brand, influenced by its reputation and the emotional or practical advantages it offers. Ardiansyah and Nilowardono (2019) further elaborate that a brand encompasses all aspects related to a company, product, or service, including both tangible features and intangible qualities. Brand image is essentially the overall perception and set of associations that consumers have about a brand, developed through both firsthand experiences with the product and secondhand exposure, such as through advertising, word-of-mouth, or media. This cognitive representation is pivotal in shaping consumer attitudes and guiding their purchasing decisions.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research approach with an explanatory design to examine the relationships between key variables. Data collection was conducted through surveys distributed to prospective Scarlett Whitening consumers in Malang City, specifically targeting Generation Z individuals. With an estimated total population of 190,670 in Malang City, the study employed non-probability sampling, utilizing purposive sampling to select respondents who met the predefined criteria. A sample size calculator determined the appropriate sample size, resulting in 385 participants.

For data analysis, the study utilized SmartPLS software, employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The analytical process encompassed two primary components: the outer model, which focuses on measuring constructs, and the inner model, which evaluates the structural relationships between variables. These models facilitated the assessment of the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments, as well as the strength and significance of the hypothesized relationships.

Several analytical techniques were applied to achieve comprehensive insights, including the R-square test for model fit, bootstrapping for statistical significance, path coefficient analysis to determine the strength of relationships, and the evaluation of specific indirect effects to understand mediating variables. This multifaceted approach allowed for a robust exploration of the interconnections among variables and their overall influence on the research context.

RESULT

R Square Value

Table 1. R Square Value Test Results

| Variable | R-square | R-square adjusted |
|--------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Purchase Intention | 0.533 | 0.529 |
| Brand Image | 0.468 | 0.465 |

The analysis of the data presented in the table reveals that the R-Square value for purchase intention stands at 0.533, or 53.3%. This means that the combined effects of celebrity endorsement, brand awareness, and brand image are able to explain just over half (53.3%) of the variance in purchase intention. The remaining 46.7% of the variance is attributable to other factors that are not explored within the scope of this research. This finding suggests that while celebrity endorsement, brand awareness, and brand image do have a notable impact on purchase intention, their influence is not exhaustive, and other external variables likely play a role in shaping consumer decisions.

Moreover, the R-Square value for the brand image variable is reported at 0.468, or 46.8%. This indicates that celebrity endorsement and brand awareness together account for nearly half (46.8%) of the variance in brand image. The remaining 53.2% of the variance is influenced by other unidentified factors, which are beyond the focus of this study. These results highlight that while the selected variables (celebrity endorsement and brand awareness) explain a substantial portion of both purchase intention and brand image, their explanatory power is moderate. Therefore, it suggests that other underlying variables not included in this study may also significantly contribute to shaping both brand image and consumer purchase intention.

Path Coefficient Test

Table 2. Path Coefficient Test

| Path | Original sample (O) | Sample mean (M) | Standard deviation (STDEV) | T statistics (O/STDEV) | P values |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Celebrity Endorsement -> Purchase Intention | 0.504 | 0.499 | 0.093 | 5.393 | 0.000 |
| Celebrity Endorsement -> Brand Image | 0.376 | 0.380 | 0.078 | 4.831 | 0.000 |
| Brand Awareness -> Purchase Intention | 0.172 | 0.178 | 0.073 | 2.348 | 0.019 |
| Brand Awareness -> Brand Image | 0.374 | 0.368 | 0.064 | 5.824 | 0.000 |
| Brand Image -> Purchase Intention | 0.138 | 0.140 | 0.084 | 1.635 | 0.103 |

Table 3. Specific Indirect Effect Test

| | Original sample (O) | Sample mean (M) | Standard deviation (STDEV) | T statistics (O/STDEV) | P values |
|--|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Celebrity Endorsement -> Brand Image -> Purchase Intention | 0.052 | 0.054 | 0.036 | 1.443 | 0.150 |
| Brand Awareness -> Brand Image -> Purchase Intention | 0.052 | 0.051 | 0.031 | 1.647 | 0.100 |

DISCUSSION

Based on the descriptive statistical analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn: Purchase intention is measured by four indicators: transactional interest, referential interest, preferential interest, and explorative interest. The analysis reveals a grand mean of 4.28, indicating that consumers exhibit a high purchase intention for Scarlett Whitening products, primarily due to the wide variety of products that cater to their skincare needs. Celebrity endorsement is assessed by five indicators: trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, respect, and similarity. The analysis yields a grand mean of 4.45, suggesting that Sehun from EXO's appealing appearance significantly enhances consumers' purchase intentions for Scarlett Whitening products.

Brand awareness is evaluated through four indicators: unawareness of the brand, brand recognition, brand recall, and top-of-mind awareness. The analysis of all items shows a grand mean of 4.15, implying that consumers are primarily exposed to Scarlett Whitening products through advertisements on social media or the internet. Finally, brand image is measured by three indicators: strength of brand associations, favorability of brand associations, and uniqueness of brand associations. The statistical analysis results in a grand mean of 4.42, signifying that consumers have a favorable perception of Scarlett Whitening, especially appreciating the brand's travel-friendly packaging.

The findings derived from hypothesis testing and data analysis conducted with SmartPLS v. 4.1.0.8 offer valuable insights into the proposed hypotheses of this research. Initially, the analysis reveals that celebrity endorsement has a significant and positive effect on the purchase intention of Scarlett Whitening consumers in Malang City. With a significance value of 0.000, which is well below the 0.05 threshold, this result supports the acceptance of hypothesis 1. This outcome is consistent with Kurniawan et al., (2020), whose study also identified a strong influence of celebrity endorsements on consumer purchasing behavior. This finding underscores the pivotal role that celebrity endorsements play in shaping consumer preferences and driving purchase intentions, emphasizing the importance of carefully selecting celebrities who resonate with the target audience.

In addition, brand awareness was found to have a significant impact on purchase intention, with a significance value of 0.000, further supporting the acceptance of hypothesis 2. This result aligns with the study by Lumingkewas et al. (2023), which highlighted the substantial influence of brand awareness on consumer purchase decisions. The analysis demonstrates that the more consumers are able to recognize and recall a brand, the more likely they are to consider it for purchase, reinforcing the notion that building brand recognition is a critical factor in influencing consumer behavior. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that celebrity endorsement has a positive and statistically significant effect on the brand image of Scarlett Whitening, as evidenced by a significance value of 0.000. This finding leads to the acceptance of hypothesis 3, supporting the research by Adam M. et al. (2022), which highlighted the positive impact of celebrity endorsement on brand image. Additionally, brand awareness was shown to significantly influence brand image, with a significance value of 0.000, confirming the acceptance of hypothesis 4. These findings align with the work of Adriano et al. (2022), which demonstrated that brand awareness positively impacts the brand image, further highlighting the interconnectedness between consumer recognition and the perceptions they hold about a brand.

However, the investigation into the effect of brand image on purchase intention yielded a significance value of 0.103, which exceeds the 0.05 threshold, indicating that brand image does not have a statistically significant effect on purchase intention. Consequently, hypothesis 5 is rejected, a result that contradicts previous research by Suganda & Arrifianti (2023), who found a significant positive relationship between brand image and purchase intention. This suggests that, in the context of Scarlett Whitening, while brand image may play a role in shaping consumer perceptions, it does not directly influence their intention to purchase. Furthermore, the analysis of brand image as a mediator in the relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention returned a significance value of 0.150, leading to the rejection of hypothesis 6. This finding diverges from the research by Eldrin Masato (2021), which posited that brand image mediates the relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention. Similarly, the mediation analysis of brand awareness on purchase intention via brand image also resulted in a significance value of 0.150, leading to the rejection of hypothesis 7. This outcome contradicts the findings of Dilla Ayustina (2019), who argued that brand image mediates the effect of brand awareness on purchase intention.

Collectively, these results indicate that while celebrity endorsement and brand awareness have a clear and direct impact on purchase intention and brand image, the role of brand image as a mediator in these relationships appears to be less significant than anticipated, warranting further research to explore the intricate dynamics between these variables and their collective influence on consumer behavior.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

This study indicates that celebrity endorsements significantly influence the purchase intention of potential Scarlett Whitening consumers by enhancing brand trust, especially when endorsed by well-known and credible figures with large followings. Additionally, higher brand awareness increases purchasing intent, as familiarity with the brand plays a crucial role in consumer decisions. While celebrity endorsements and brand awareness positively affect brand image, the study found that brand image itself does not significantly influence purchase intention. Moreover, although both celebrity endorsements and brand awareness indirectly impact purchase intention through brand image, these effects are not substantial. This suggests that factors like celebrity endorsements and brand awareness have a more direct influence on consumer behavior.

Recommendation

To enhance Scarlett Whitening's marketing strategy, the brand should carefully select celebrity endorsers who resonate with its target audience and align with its image and products. Boosting brand awareness can be achieved through targeted digital campaigns, influencer partnerships, and interactive content that engages consumers and reinforces recall. To improve brand image, Scarlett Whitening should focus on product quality, excellent customer service, and authentic user reviews. Future research could explore other factors, such as product quality and pricing, that influence purchase intention. Expanding the study to other regions and using tools like SEM could provide deeper insights into the relationships between celebrity endorsement, brand awareness, and consumer decisions.

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