

# **Examining the Impact of Celebrity Endorsement on Student's Purchase Intention of Smartphone**

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## **Abstract**

Consumers in Malaysia have witnessed the use of smartphone expand dramatically and companies hire celebrity as their brand endorser to promote the smartphones. Substantial dollars has been spent on celebrity endorsement as marketing tactics. Hence, it is importance to understand it success. The objectives of this study is to examine the extent at which university students have been impacted by celebrity endorsements on their purchase intention for smartphones. Quantitative method and survey were used to captured 119 data from respondents. The results revealed that celebrity attractiveness has the greatest impact on the purchase intention of smartphones meanwhile celebrity trustworthiness shows the lowest impact on students. The results of this study provides an exclusive viewpoint concerning students' purchase intention on smartphones and assists the marketing practitioners to better understand the use of celebrity endorsement

**Keywords:** Celebrity Endorsement, Purchase intention, Smartphone

## **1. Introduction**

The use of smartphone has grown steadily since the availability of internet emerged in mid 1990s. In Malaysia, considering the preferences of millennial customers on using smartphone, the smartphone industry is expected to grow significantly. Companies and marketers spent substantial dollars in developing the marketing strategies to attract the attention of customers. Smartphone industry begun to hire popular celebrities to endorse the brand with the aims to influence customers and make their brand different from contending companies. In Malaysia, for instance, ViVo Malaysia, a smartphone company has appointed Janna Nick and Dato Sri Siti Nurhaliza as their brand ambassador. Furthermore, companies believe that the celebrity may affect the way on how consumer perceived brands and thus influence them to purchase the product.

Earlier study also has showed that celebrity endorsement has a significant impact on consumer purchase intention (Munnukka, et. al.,2016). When the popular celebrity appears in the advertisement, the advertisement said to be more effective (McCormic, 2016). Celebrity improves brand awareness, generates a favourable brand attitude, and develops brand loyalty. However, celebrity endorsement is not always beneficial to the brand. For instance, celebrity who done a misconduct or involved with illegal activities also said contribute to negative impact

on the brand endorsed. It may give impact to consumer perception about the brand and affect the company's performance such as sales (McCartney, 2014). In addition to this, celebrity also may overshadow the brand and thus failed to deliver value as an endorser.

The issues mentioned above leads to the purpose of this study with the aims to (1) analyse the demographic profile of students in one public university in Selangor and (2) determine the extent at which celebrity endorsement affect students' purchase intention on smartphone. In order to achieve the aims, this study developed the framework that combines items from Ohanian(1991) and Schimdt & Hitchon (1999) to better understand on how the celebrity that endorsed the smartphone brands may influence students' purchase intention. The findings of this study may contribute firstly to marketers to understand the key influence of celebrity endorsement on students' purchase intention. Secondly, it will give ideas to marketers in designing the right marketing strategies once they able to grasp the valuable information conforming student purchase intention.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Celebrity Endorsement and Purchase Intention**

Celebrity endorsements is defined as “an agreement between an individual who enjoys public recognition and an entity to use the celebrity for the purpose of promoting the entity (Bergkvist, L. 2016). With the intense competition in the market, celebrity endorsement has become popular strategy among marketers all around the world. This strategy focuses on hiring popular and well-known celebrities to endorse the brand. According to Morimoto (2017), celebrity includes a real people featured on reality television programs. For instance, Zizan Razak from one reality show in Malaysia was appointed as ambassador for Honor smartphone brand and recently, a new sort of celebrity has emerged as a result of the empowerment of new media known as the online influencer or the media social influencer (Khamis et.al, 2016). Persuasion is likely to be influenced by celebrities who endorsed brand (Yang, 2018). For example, Eren-Erdogm, I. et. al., (2016) found that celebrity attributes influence the purchasing of both non-durable and durable products. Moreover, the appearance of celebrity in advertisements has had a bigger and favourable impact on purchase intention (McCormick. K., 2016). Celebrity endorsement may help to place a brand in the minds of consumers (Munnukka, et al., 2016), maintain and attract consumer attentions to brands (Pileliene. et al. 2017), and therefore improve brand recall and equity. However, Munukka (2016) mentioned since the usage of non- celebrity endorsers has grown in popularity, the credibility of some celebrity has been questioned by consumers and research conducted by Pileliene. et al. (2017) discovered that there is no difference in the degree of purchase intentions for brand marketed by both celebrity and non-celebrity endorsers. Given the benefits and drawbacks of celebrity endorsements, it is critical to understand how to select the right celebrities, what qualities to look for and how genuine celebrity influence student purchase intention.

## **2.2 Celebrity attractiveness and purchase intention**

Early research linked three characteristics to attractiveness: the endorser's likeability, similarity, and familiarity with the customer (Ohanian, 1991). Likeability of the celebrity is determined by factors such as values and physical appearance, as well as a bond of similarity in which the viewer or reader believes they share or would want to share the celebrity's self-image (McCartney, 2014). Prior study stated both celebrity and non-celebrity spokespersons have a favourable effect on purchase intention and brand attitudes, brand image and brand trust (Klaus-Peter Wiedmann and Walter von Mettenheim, 2021, Gong & Li, 2017; Muda, Musa, & Putit, 2012). According to Adi (2018), celebrity attractiveness influences customer perception. A person who is physically appealing has a better chance of altering their mind. The celebrity's draws attention to the product, causing the customer to purchase the sponsored product (Eren-Erdogm, Lak, and Cicek, 2016). In other words, an attractive celebrity may convince customers to purchase a product that has been endorsed. However, research by Park and Lin (2020) discovered that celebrity attractiveness had no effect on purchasing intention. Study done by Hani, Marwan and Andra (2018) also found no correlation between celebrity attractiveness and customer purchase intention in Lebanese jewellery settings. This result suggests that consumers are more likely to trust the brand than the celebrity who endorsed the item. It may be said that attractiveness encompasses not only physical appeal but also intellectual abilities, personality traits and lifestyle power (Erdogen, 1999).

## **2.3 The Fit between celebrity and the endorsed brand and purchase intention**

According to McCormic (2016), the celebrity who is fit with the endorsed brand has a substantial impact on advertising efficacy and purchase intention. When the celebrity and the brand are both powerful, it has a stronger impact on purchase intention and improve the efficacy of endorsements (Carlson, Donovan, Deitz, Bauer & Lala, 2020). Research of millennials found that when there is a match between the celebrity and the product, they are more inclined to purchase it (McCormic, 2016). Celebrity that gained experience, expertise, or abilities linked to the product leads to the increase in perceptions of the fit between celebrity and the endorsed product. However, there have been reports of detrimental impacts on celebrity endorsements due to mismatch between the celebrity and the product. Study conducted by Yoo and Jin (2015), when the celebrity- product fit is poor, it has a detrimental impact on the celebrity's perceived trustworthiness and attractiveness.

## **2.4 Celebrity Expertise and Purchase Intention**

The term expertise refers to source's level of knowledge. It is described as having a high degree of knowledge, experience and problem-solving skills in a certain subject. For celebrity, it indicates that expertise may be altered based on how much information they have about the product they endorsed. It is so useful to specify whether a source is well versed on a certain subject to convey the source's expertise (Klaus-Peter Wiedmann and Walter von Mettenheim, (2021). For instance, the findings of the study done by Aaron von Felbert and Christoph Breuer (2020) in the context of sports related endorser shows that sports celebrities are more successful than sports company managers in influencing consumer purchase intentions. It can conclude that,

celebrity with high degree of knowledge has more significant influence on consumer purchase intention.

## **2.5 Celebrity trustworthiness and Purchase intention**

Consumers' perceptions of the celebrity's honesty, integrity and believableness are influenced by their trustworthiness. Celebrity with a high perceived trustworthiness is more likely to give impact on consumer's view and behavioural intentions (Ohanion, 1990). According to Klaus-Peter Wiedmann and Walter von Mettenheim, (2021), trustworthiness also contributes to the most significant influence on brand image, brand trust and brand satisfaction. In the context of destination brand love, study done by Hui Zhang, Honggang Xu and Dogan Gursoy (2020), found that, potential tourists have a tendency to generate a deep emotional attachment to the destination when the potential tourist perceived the celebrity is honest, reliable and trusted. Therefore, celebrity endorsements might be perceived as a brand marketing tactics and information source especially for the potential customers and thus give an impact to their purchase intention.

## **3. Methodology**

The study used descriptive designs to conduct quantitative analysis. The population in this study is students in one public university in Selangor. This study focus on university students because students are often perceived as early adopters of new technologies notably for smartphone. Purposive sampling was employed and survey is conducted among students from various faculties. To capture the respondent's respond, items introduced by Ohanian (1991) were used to assess the source of attractiveness, trustworthiness, and source of expertise, whereas Schimdt and Hitchon (1999) items were used to measure the fit between the celebrity and the product endorsed. Malaysian celebrity was selected for one product category; smartphone.

## **4. Data Analysis**

This section presents and discusses the results of the demographic profiles and the objectives of the study in detail to further understand the purpose of the study. As is revealed in Table 1, there were 101 female students (84.9%) and 18 male students (15.1%) among the 119 responses. The majority of the respondents in this study were between the ages of 21 and 23, with 76 respondents accounting for 63.9 percent of the total. Furthermore, with 108 responses, it reveals that average students who are single (90.8%) were students from the Faculty of Business and Management (40.3%). 32.8 % respondents in semester 3 with an average 44.5 % with CGPA 3.01 to 3.5.

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Demographic Variables		Frequency	(%)
Gender	Male	18	15.1
	Female	101	84.9
Age	18-20	36	30.3
	21-23	76	63.9
	24-26	3	2.5
	Above 27	4	3.4
	Chinese	1	0.8
Nationality	India	0	0
	Others	5	4.2
	Others	5	4.2
Marital Status	Single	108	90.8
	Married	7	5.9
	Others	4	3.4
Highest education	SPM	1	0.8
	STPM/ Certificate	7	5.9
	Foundation	17	14.3
	Diploma	36	30.3
	Degree	55	46.2
	Master	3	2.5
Faculty	Faculty of Pharmacy	9	7.6
	Faculty of Art & Design	1	0.8
	Faculty of Accountancy	19	16.0
	Faculty of Health Science	26	21.8
	Faculty in Business Management	48	40.3
	Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management	8	6.7
	Faculty of Architecture, Planning & Surveying	2	1.7
	Faculty of Education	6	5.0
Semester	Semester 1	26	21.8
	Semester 2	4	3.4
	Semester 3	39	32.8
	Semester 4	13	10.9
	Semester 5	21	17.6
	Semester 6	13	10.9
	Semester 7	2	1.7
	Semester 8 and above	1	0.8
Current CGPA	Below 2.00	0	0
	2.00- 2.50	4	3.4
	2.51- 3.00	26	21.8
	3.01 – 3.50	53	44.5
	Above 3.50	36	30.3

Table 2: Impact of Celebrity Endorsement on purchase intention of smartphone among students in One Public University in Malaysia.

Celebrity Endorsement		Mean ( $\mu$ )	Standard Deviation (SD)
Celebrity Attractiveness	5	4.02	0.71
Celebrity Trustworthiness	5	3.11	0.75
Celebrity Expertise	5	3.35	0.96
The Fit between the Celebrity and the Endorsed Product	5	3.59	0.85
Purchase Intention	4	3.04	0.79

Table 2 demonstrates the influence of celebrity endorsements on students' purchase intention. The findings show that students were affected by the celebrity's attractiveness in purchasing smartphone. Most of the students confessed, the celebrity that has a good looking influence them to purchase the product's endorsed. The influence of celebrity attractiveness on purchase intention among students was therefore deemed to be significant. The first three characteristics of celebrity endorsement that influence students' purchase intention on smartphone are: (1) celebrity attractiveness ( $\mu=4.02$ ,  $SD=0.171$ ), (2) the fit between the celebrity and the endorsed product ( $\mu=3.59$ ,  $SD=0.85$ ) and the celebrity expertise ( $\mu=3.35$ ,  $SD=0.96$ ). Meanwhile, the lowest characteristic that affect student's purchase intention is celebrity trustworthiness ( $\mu=3.11$ ,  $SD=0.75$ ).

## 5. DISCUSSIONS

The above results give evidence on the impact of celebrity endorsements towards students' purchase intention on smartphone. The findings of the research unveiled that celebrity's attractiveness followed by the fit between celebrity and the endorsed brand have the significant impact the intention to purchase a smartphone among students in one public university in Selangor. The findings adds the contribution to the existing studies by conforming that celebrity attractiveness and the fit between celebrity and endorsed brand are the two most important factors in purchase intention (Gong and Li, 2017 and B.D. Carlson et al. 2020). Findings reveals, students are drawn to fashionable celebrities which leads to a desire to purchase a smartphone. It is possible that students who are self-conscious about their appearance would copy celebrities' styles in order to demonstrate their self-confidence and seek acceptance among peers.

Secondly, findings reveals, when the celebrity is fit with the endorsed product, it will give an impact on student's purchase intention. The fit should, in particular, represent the brand's main features as well as the celebrity's unique characteristics. Such advertising tactics are more compelling when students perceive a fit between the celebrity and the promoted product. According to B.D Carlson et al.(2020), the solid fit between celebrity and the endorsed product might contribute to greater impact on purchasing intention and boosts the effectiveness of endorsements.

Thirdly ranked as indicated in the study is that when the celebrity is an expert, it has an impact on student's purchase intention, implying that students may create their purchase intention simply by referring to celebrity expertness in the advertisements. In particular, consumers are more likely to see a match between the celebrity's expert and the brand that they endorsed. Then, the lowest ranking perceived by students is linked to the trustworthiness of celebrity. Students responded that when the celebrity is honest, the chance of a purchase increase. It perhaps due to the student's perceptions that a celebrity's job is to endorse the product (smartphone) and probably does not utilise such products in their daily lives. This result is consistent with Sigh and Banaerjee (2018) findings which indicated that the lower the celebrity's trustworthiness, the less influence the celebrity has on customer purchase intention.

## **6. Conclusion**

The outcome of this study give a novel way for studying the impact of celebrity endorsements on the purchase intention of smartphone among students. The most important findings that may be drawn from this study was the celebrity attractiveness has the greatest impact on student purchase intention. This is because the celebrity in this study is a well-known Malaysian actress, the majority of students thought she was attractive and fashionable and thus influence their purchase intention. This study could suggest smartphone companies to position and promote their products by focusing on the celebrity attractiveness and also the fit between the celebrity and the endorsed brand in order to influence students as well as other customers in their purchase decision for smartphone.

This study also makes recommendations for further research. Firstly, this study was performed only in one Public University in Selangor, thus the findings may not be generalized to the rest of Malaysian's student. As a result, additional research should be conducted in Malaysia for various age groups and genders to allow for more comparisons and generalisation. Secondly, this study only utilised one female celebrity, which may has influenced the results. To further understand the impact of celebrity endorsements on purchase intention, future research should look on multiple celebrities in advertisements. Despite its limitations, this study provides significant insights from the perspective of students and provides useful guidance to smartphone companies in improving their marketing strategies by employing celebrities as endorsers.

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