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The Effects of Celebrity Endorsement towards Purchase Intention among Students in One Public University in Malaysia

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Abstract

Celebrity endorser has been tremendously used by advertisers to enhance their product's brand name and it is undeniable celebrity plays a big role in persuading customers. It has become an effective tool to attract customers and helps to create purchase intention among them. Therefore, there are many elements that need to be highlighted in findings the right celebrity to endorse the product. To gain better insight, celebrity attractiveness, celebrity trustworthiness, celebrity expertise and the fit between the celebrity and the endorser are the element tested in the study. The study was conducted to examine the effect of using different celebrity for the same product brand on purchase intention among students. Quantitative method has been employed for this study and survey questionnaire used to collect the data. Questionnaires were collected across faculties at one of the public University in Malaysia and the result of the study indicated only the fit between Celebrity A and the endorsed product associated with purchase among students. Meanwhile, all other independent variables may not lead to purchase intention among students. Recommendation and future study are discussed.

Introduction

Many organizations in Malaysia urged to invests large amount of money by hiring popular celebrity to endorse their products and services. They believed the use of celebrity make the advertisement more believable and thus product favourable advertisement results. Furthermore, according to Muda, et.al (2014), celebrities are impactful in promoting products and services. Advertisement becomes more effective with the use of familiar celebrity (McCormic, 2016). Since hiring an appropriate and affluent endorser is very costly and risky, hence there is a need to study the effects of celebrity endorsement towards customer purchase intention. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the effect of two different celebrity endorsements towards purchase intention among students in one of Public University in Malaysia. This study aims to determine how different attributes of these two (2) different endorser (attractiveness, trustworthiness and the fit between the celebrity and the endorsed product) has a positive relationship with purchase intention among students.

Literature Review

Celebrity endorsement and purchase intention: Celebrity endorsement is a universal attribute of modern marketing (McCracken and Grant, 1989). Celebrity endorsement enhances product visibility (Dotson, Hyatt, 2005) and developed the attitude toward purchase behavior (Amos, et. Al, 2008). Celebrities who endorse the brand build up the perception of customers towards the buying intention and it is a customers' positive idea about celebrity endorser (Ohanian, 1991). Furthermore, many multinational organizations used celebrity endorsement in their advertisement because they believed that the use of celebrities in advertisement have given them the greater and positive effect for consumer buying behavior and also their purchase intention (McCutcheon, et al., 2002). However, the result of single celebrity opinion through purchase intention is his expertise rather than other factor attributes. It is found that the use of celebrity can give positive result in consumer buying intention because the message of advertisement is easily reconnected and favorably increase customer attention towards advertisement (Hamish, 2005). Moreover, purchase intention indirectly associated with celebrity endorser and it is found to have a significance influence toward product (Goldsmith, et al. 2000). The study done by Dutta and Singh (2013) found that the purchase of healthy foods brands by the indian housewives also influenced by the celebrity endorsements. But, celebrity endorser also found to have a negative effect on buying behavior when society associate negative event with the celebrity endorser (Thwaites, et. al. 2012).

Celebrity attractiveness and purchase intention: Solomon and Michael, (2002) referring celebrity attractiveness as the endorser's physical appearance, personality, likeability, and similarity to the consumer. The previous study stated that physically attractive spokespersons for both celebrity and non-celebrity would have a positive impact on brand attitude and buying intentions (Kahle, et. al, 1985). Previous result found that an advertisement for attractiveness related products were more visible with the use of attractive celebrity (Kamins, 1990). However, the effects of celebrity attractiveness and credibility were affected differently by product categories (McCormic, 2016). Hence, a promotion alone does not enough, as the level of attractiveness is a main element that can contribute to the success or failure of promoting the product. Thus, the study predicts the following hypotheses:

H1A: There is a relationship between Celebrity A attractiveness and purchase intention among students.

H1B: There is a relationship between Celebrity B attractiveness and purchase intention among students.

Celebrity trustworthiness and purchase intention: Moorman et al. (1993), define trustworthiness as a belief or an expectancy that the person can be depend on. It refers to a behavioral intention that explains a reliance on a person and involving vulnerability and uncertainty on the part of the trustor. Choudhuri & Holbrook (2002). Mcknight et al. (2002), revealed in his study that trustworthiness occurs when an e-vendor enjoys a good reputation in its operation and trusting intention of consumer. However, it did not consider prices, though price is an essential factor that increases or decreases transactional risks and has a great impact on building trust (Ba, S. and Pavlou, P.A., 2002). In addition, trustworthy endorsers assist the brand's credibility, reduce consumer doubts, and promote economic gains (Ketchen Jr. et.al, 2008). Hence, the study presents the following hypothesis:

H2A: There is a relationship between Celebrity A trustworthiness and purchase intention among students.

H2B: There is a relationship between Celebrity B trustworthiness and purchase intention among students.

The fit between celebrity and the endorsed brand and purchase intention: There are different entities that can influence the intention to purchase among consumer such as expert, celebrity, whether an organization or an endorser expertise. Daneshvary and Schwer (2000). McCormick. K (2016) added celebrity endorsers are more attractive and credible compared to non-celebrity endorsers. Moreover, according to Lee and Thorson (2008), when there is a moderate mismatch between celebrity endorser and the endorsed product, the celebrity endorsement is appraised more favorably in regards to purchase intention. The choice of celebrity should fit with the associations the brand currently has (Ohanian, 1991). In addition, consumer must have both positive attitudes towards the celebrity as person and also as an endorser to influence them to purchase the products. The previous study revealed the association between brand personality and celebrity personality had a significant influence on brand attitude and purchase intention (Pradhan, et.al, 2015) Other groups of customers (millennials) also shown that they are less likely to be influenced to purchase the advertised product when there is no proper fit between the celebrity endorser and the product (McCormick, 2016). Thus, this study offers the following hypothesis:

H3A: There is a relationship between the fit between Celebrity A and the endorsed product and purchase intention among students.

H3B: There is a relationship between the fit between Celebrity B and the endorsed product and purchase intention among students.

Methodology

Primary objective of this study is to examine the effect of two different celebrity endorsement towards purchase intention among students. For this purpose, the study adopts a quantitative

method to meet the research objectives. Two different celebrities were selected: Celebrity A & Celebrity B for one product category: smartphone. To capture the respondent's response, a questionnaire was designed and the variables measurement were developed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree'. It ascertained demographic variables (gender, age, race, marital status, faculties and education level) and the variables of interest in the study. The variable of interest included the celebrities' attractiveness, trustworthiness and the fit between the celebrity and the endorser. The variables used to measure each construct were derived from previous studies and adjusted to the context of study. The respondents were from the same location; one public university in Malaysia and the sample was drawn from a mixture of university students. The convenience sampling method was used to reach the target population. The responses were collected and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 2. Pearson correlation and regression were performed to analyze the data.

Results

Demographic Profile

Demographic information on the respondents involved are depicted in table 1. Almost all of the respondents surveyed were female (84.9 percent) and 15.1 percent were male. An overwhelming majority (90.8 percent) of students were single while 5.9 percent were married. 43 percent of the students had a bachelor's degree, 30 percent had a diploma, and 2.5 percent had a master. Finally, the study mostly involving students from Faculty of Business and Management which constitute 40.3 percent and the least were Faculty of Art & Design with 0.8 percent.

The Cronbach's Alpha Analysis

The Cronbach's alpha for three (3) items measuring purchase intention is 0.849. The highest value of Cronbach's alpha is celebrity trustworthiness of Celebrity B with 0.967 as compared to other variables used in this study. Next, items measuring celebrity attractiveness of Celebrity B recorded at 0.963 in Cronbach's alpha followed by the fit between the celebrity and the endorsed product with 0.960.

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha	Mean	Standard Deviation
Celebrity Attractiveness	5	0.915	3.67	18.23
• Celebrity A		0.930	4.02	17.66
• Celebrity B		0.963	3.32	27.11
Celebrity Trustworthiness	5	0.937	3.12	21.79
• Celebrity A		0.941	3.11	24.12
• Celebrity B		0.967	3.12	26.60
The Fit between the Celebrity and the Endorsed Product	5	0.926	3.38	22.19
• Celebrity A		0.929	3.59	23.68
• Celebrity B		0.960	3.17	29.02
Purchase Intention	4	0.849	3.04	25.99

Table 2. Cronbach’s Alpha & Descriptive Result

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Analysis

	Purchase Intention	Celebrity Attractiveness • Celebrity A • Celebrity B	Celebrity Trustworthiness • Celebrity A • Celebrity B	The Fit between the Celebrity and the Endorsed Product • Celebrity A • Celebrity B
Purchase Intention	1			
Celebrity Attractiveness	0.168	1		
• Celebrity A	0.141			
• Celebrity B	0.137			
Celebrity Trustworthiness	0.206*	0.518**	1	
• Celebrity A	0.259**	0.315**		
• Celebrity B	0.106	0.591**		
The Fit between the Celebrity and the Endorsed Product	0.293**	0.598**	0.656**	1
• Celebrity A	0.336**	0.433**	0.531**	
• Celebrity B	0.171	0.631	0.684**	

Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Relationship between Celebrity Attractiveness and Purchase Intention.

The Pearson Correlation was used to identify if there is any relationship between Celebrity A and Celebrity B attractiveness and purchase intention among students. Based on the correlation analysis, both celebrity attractiveness and purchase intention, between Celebrity A attractiveness and

purchase intention, and between Celebrity B attractiveness and purchase intention is not significant. P-value for both celebrity attractiveness are not more than 0.20. (Rule of thumb by Guilford's Law). This result can be supported by previous study done by Saaksjarvi, M et al [24] that choosing unattractive celebrity have a positive effect on purchase intentions thus might be the safer choice.

Relationship between Celebrity Trustworthiness and Purchase Intention

Next, the study would like to examine further if there is any relationship between Celebrity A and Celebrity B trustworthiness and purchase intention among students. Correlation analysis indicate that there is a low, definite but small relationship between Celebrity A trustworthiness and purchase intention as shown in table 3. However, correlation analysis for Celebrity B trustworthiness show almost negligible relationship with the value 0.106 which is not more than 0.20.

Relationship between The Fit between the Celebrity and the Endorsed Product and Purchase Intention.

Lastly, the correlation result for the fit between Celebrity A show that there is a low, definite but small relationship between these two variables. The result further demonstrated that Table 4 the fit between Celebrity A and the endorsed product is positively related with dependent variable (purchase intention) with the value 0.0336 (<0.05). This is in line with the literature suggest that a moderate mismatch between the endorser and the endorsed brand will favourably results in consumers' behavioural intentions, Lee and Thorson [10]. However, there is no relationship between the fit between Celebrity B and the endorsed product and purchase intention among students. The correlation analysis show the value is 0.171 which is not more than 0.20, indicating that there is an almost negligible relationship.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that the fit between Celebrity A and the endorsed product positively affect purchase intention among students of public University in Malaysia. Based on literature related to the fit between the celebrity and the endorsed product, it found that the fit between the celebrity and the endorsed product may lead to purchase intention. In fact, Celebrity A has 5 million follower in her Instagram thus indirectly influence the purchase behaviour among her follower. Meanwhile, all other independent variables such as both celebrities attractiveness, Celebrity A attractiveness, Celebrity B attractiveness, both celebrities trustworthiness, Celebrity A trustworthiness, Celebrity B trustworthiness, the fit between both celebrities and the endorsed product and the fit between Celebrity B and the endorsed product may not lead to purchase intention among students in public University in Malaysia.

Therefore, knowledge on this relationship is important for the advertisers to determine what factor is important to students and help them to choose an effective endorser for an advertisement. The current study merely takes celebrity attractiveness, trustworthiness and fit between celebrity and the endorser brand. Future studies may be recommended to pursue more factors or even a mediator between the dependent variables and independent variables to gain further insight on the topic such as credibility and celebrity expertise. Furthermore, the sample in this study were students and this

fact raises the question of generalizability; thus, a future study should explore the effects of celebrity endorsement to different demographic variable such as generation X or millennials. Further, this study could be expended to other sample in other countries as it may generate different results. For instance, are millennials in other countries influenced by the celebrities as Malaysian' students? Therefore, this study should include a measurement across different cultures. Finally, male endorsements should be explored as well as male celebrities may has influence on customer purchase behavior and other celebrities and different product categories should be examined because it could generate different results. This study augmented our knowledge theoretically and empirically investigating on the effects of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention particularly on students in public university.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of this study contribute to our academic and practical knowledge of the effects of celebrity endorsements towards purchase customers among students in one of Public University in Malaysia. As described above, this study is also valuable because this study shows that celebrity attractiveness, trustworthiness has no effect on student's purchase behavior purchase behavior for both celebrities and only the fit between Celebrity A and the endorsed product has an effect to students in public relations while not for Celebrity B.

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