

The effect of celebrity endorsers on advertising attitude and brand image: an experimental study

ARTICLE INFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

Advertising plays an important role in introducing and reinforcing a brand's image, and marketers increasingly rely on celebrity endorsers to strengthen the persuasive impact of their advertisements. This study examines the effect of celebrity endorsers on advertising attitude and brand image using an experimental research design, a method suited to testing the effect of a deliberate treatment or manipulation of an independent variable on other variables under controlled conditions. Participants were 55 students from the Faculty of Economics at a public university in Indonesia, who were exposed to an advertisement featuring a celebrity endorser previously unfamiliar to them, in order to minimize bias from pre-existing recognition. Data were analyzed using regression analysis with partial (t-test) significance testing at the 0.05 level. The results show that celebrity endorsers have a positive and significant effect on advertising attitude ($\beta = 0.353$, $p = 0.000$, $R^2 = 0.306$) and a positive and significant effect on brand image ($\beta = 0.389$, $p = 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.197$). These findings indicate that the credibility, attractiveness, and communicative skill of a celebrity endorser meaningfully shape how consumers evaluate both the advertisement and the brand it promotes, offering practical implications for endorser selection in advertising strategy.

Keywords: *celebrity endorser; advertising attitude; brand image; experimental design*

INTRODUCTION

Advertising functions as an information medium that plays an important role in introducing and reinforcing a brand's image. Among the advertising media favored by marketers, television remains prominent because it is a sophisticated and engaging audiovisual medium capable of reaching a mass audience simultaneously through broadcasts of roughly sixty seconds. Jefkins (1997) states that advertising is an information medium designed to attract audience interest, remain original, carry certain distinctive and persuasive characteristics, and thereby voluntarily encourage consumers to act in the way the advertiser intends.

Advertising is the promotion of goods, services, companies, and ideas that must be paid for by a sponsor (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008). Consumers weigh many factors when deciding whether to repurchase a product, including product or service quality, which depends on its ability to satisfy customers' stated or implied needs (Armstrong & Kotler, 2002). Beyond quality, consumers also consider the brand's image.

When producing an advertisement, marketers are required to be creative and innovative in order to capture consumer attention and generate purchase interest (Desita Ratna Dewi et al., n.d.). Advertising can be used effectively to build a product's or company's long-term image and can also trigger immediate purchase; in other words, advertising plays a role in shaping a brand's image, which in turn can influence consumers' purchase interest in that brand (Fandy, 2011). One strategy widely used to strengthen this persuasive effect is the use of a celebrity endorser—a well-known public figure engaged to represent and speak on behalf of a product.

Although the role of celebrity endorsers in shaping consumer response to advertising is well documented conceptually, empirical evidence on their simultaneous effect on both advertising attitude and brand image—tested under controlled experimental conditions among Indonesian university students—remains limited. This

study therefore aims to examine the effect of celebrity endorsers on (1) advertising attitude and (2) brand image, using an experimental design intended to isolate the causal effect of endorser exposure from confounding factors such as prior familiarity with the endorser. The remainder of this article reviews the relevant literature and develops the research hypotheses, followed by the methodology, results, discussion, conclusion, and implications of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Key Concepts and Prior Studies

Advertising is broadly defined as any paid form of nonpersonal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor, delivered through print media (newspapers and magazines), broadcast media (radio and television), network media (telephone, cable, satellite, wireless), electronic media (audio recordings, video recordings, CD-ROM, websites), and display media such as billboards, signage, and posters (Desita Ratna Dewi et al., n.d.). Advertising is regarded as one of the most effective means of communicating a product message, with the aim of introducing the product to consumers and, ultimately, stimulating purchase interest (Fandy, 2011). Consistent with this, Jefkins (1997) describes advertising as the most persuasive form of sales message directed at the most potential prospective buyers of a given product or service, at the lowest possible cost, while repeated exposure to an advertising message has been shown to strengthen attention, interest, desire, and ultimately purchase action (Faella Sufa, 2012).

Brand image is the process by which a person selects, organizes, and interprets information inputs to create a meaningful picture of a brand (Keller & Kotler, 2009). Similarly, brand image has been described as the totality of consumer perceptions of a brand, formed through information and experience with that brand (Wijanarko et al., 2016). A strong brand image is a necessity for every company, since it constitutes a highly valuable corporate asset that requires sustained effort to build; a strong image, in turn, helps establish a positive product name. Greater consumer familiarity with a brand has also been associated with increased consumer confidence, more favorable brand attitude, and stronger purchase interest (Firmansyah, 2015).

Advertising attitude refers to how a consumer feels about a given advertisement—an affective response. Assael (2001) defines attitude toward the ad as "the consumer's predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to a particular ad," that is, a consumer's tendency to evaluate an advertisement positively or negatively. Positive cognitive responses (support arguments and source bolstering) generally produce a positive attitude toward the advertisement, whereas negative cognitive responses (counterarguments and source derogation) generally produce a negative attitude; because the affective component dominates, advertising attitude is typically measured through evaluations such as good–bad, likable–unlikable, interesting–uninteresting, creative–uncreative, and informative–uninformative.

An advertising message becomes appealing when its content holds genuine appeal for consumers; three message-design considerations are commonly noted—rational, moral, and emotional appeal (Firmansyah, 2015). Communication effectiveness depends on both how a message is expressed and its underlying content: ineffective communication may stem from the wrong message being used, or the right message being poorly expressed (Keller & Kotler, 2009). Creativity in advertising, in turn, concerns the ability to generate unique and fresh ideas that can serve as solutions to communication problems (Wenats et al., 2012).

Advertisers and advertising agencies are willing to pay a premium for celebrities who are well liked and respected by the target audience, in the expectation that the celebrity can favorably influence consumer attitudes and behavior toward the endorsed product (Firmansyah, 2015). Four roles have been identified for celebrities engaged to promote a product or service: (1) providing testimonials based on personal use of the product; (2) providing endorsement, lending their persona to stimulate consumer desire without necessarily claiming expertise; (3) acting as a performer within the

advertisement; and (4) serving as a company spokesperson, representing the company in public and media relations beyond the advertisement itself (Firmansyah, 2015; Shimp, 2014). Endorsers in advertising can further be classified into two types: expert celebrity endorsers and common people (non-celebrity) endorsers (K, 2013).

Celebrities—understood as public figures recognized for achievement in fields distinct from the product category they endorse—are used extensively in magazine, radio, and television advertising, including, in some cases, deceased public figures (Prakosa, n.d.). Celebrities from the entertainment or sports world are particularly prominent in advertising because consumers readily identify with them, often viewing them as heroes on account of their achievements, personalities, or physical attractiveness. A celebrity endorser functions as a spokesperson for the product, shaping consumer attitudes and behavior toward the endorsed brand; the celebrity's words and charisma can direct consumer attention, and using a celebrity's "voice" is intended to increase consumer confidence that the advertised product is genuinely of high quality (Prakosa, n.d.). At the same time, negative information about a celebrity endorser has been found to affect not only consumer perception of the celebrity but also perception of the endorsed product (Prakosa, n.d.), underscoring the importance of careful endorser selection. Consistent with this view, Shimp (2014) defines an endorser as a television personality, film actor, well-known athlete, or other public figure—living or deceased—capable of generating audience trust in the message being conveyed.

Theoretical or Conceptual Foundation

This study defines the celebrity endorser as the independent variable (X1): a promotional device used in advertising for marketing purposes, referring to the spokesperson who supports the advertised product (Umar, 2008), measured using ten indicators. According to Royan (2004), the indicators of a celebrity endorser comprise four elements: (1) visibility, the extent of the endorser's popularity; (2) credibility, the endorser's perceived knowledge of the endorsed product; (3) attraction, the endorser's physical and personal appeal; and (4) power, the endorser's ability to influence consumers.

Advertising attitude is treated as a dependent variable (Y1): it represents a consumer's favorable or unfavorable response to an advertisement (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009), expressed as favorable or unfavorable and good or poor evaluations (Biehal et al., 1992) within a specific exposure situation, and is measured using four indicators drawn from Pasharibu et al. (2012): whether the advertisement provides product information, whether the advertisement appears attractive, whether it draws repeated attention and viewing, and whether the advertisement is relevant.

Brand image is treated as a second dependent variable (Y2): a unique set of associations that marketers aim to create or maintain (Sangadji & Sopiah, 2013), measured using six indicators drawn from Fitriana (2013): friendly/unfriendly (ease of consumer recognition), modern/outdated, useful/not useful, popular/unpopular, gentle/harsh (product texture or feel), and artificial/natural (authenticity of supporting components or form).

Hypotheses

Chu et al. (2012) report that celebrity endorsers have a positive and significant effect on advertising attitude, while Wijanarko et al. (2016) report that celebrity endorsers have a positive and significant effect on brand image. Based on this evidence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Celebrity endorsers have a positive and significant effect on advertising attitude.

H2: Celebrity endorsers have a positive and significant effect on brand image.

Table 1. Constructs and Variable Definitions

No.	Construct / Variable	Definition / Indicators	Source
1	Celebrity Endorser (X1) — independent	Promotional spokesperson supporting the advertised product; measured via 10 indicators	Umar (2008); Royan (2004)

No.	Construct / Variable	Definition / Indicators	Source
		grouped into 4 dimensions: visibility, credibility, attraction, power.	
2	Advertising Attitude (Y1) — dependent	Consumer's favorable/unfavorable response to an advertisement; measured via 4 indicators: information provision, attractiveness, repeated attention, relevance.	Solomon & Rabolt (2009); Pasharibu et al. (2012)
3	Brand Image (Y2) — dependent	Unique set of brand associations created/maintained by marketers; measured via 6 indicators: friendly/unfriendly, modern/outdated, useful/not useful, popular/unpopular, gentle/harsh, artificial/natural.	Sangadji & Sopiah (2013); Fitriana (2013)

Notes: All constructs above are cited in the text preceding this table.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs an experimental method, used to examine the effect of a deliberate treatment or manipulation of a specific variable, with the effect of that manipulation on the independent variable observed on the dependent variable(s) under tightly controlled conditions; the study tests a causal relationship (Hidayat, 2002; Maclin, 2002). An experimental study is one in which at least one variable is manipulated to examine cause-and-effect relationships (Maclin, 2002), and is systematic, logical, and rigorous in its control of conditions (Zuriah, 2006); it can accordingly be defined as a research method used to examine the effect of a specific treatment on other variables under controlled conditions (Sugiyono, 2012). The experimental treatment in this study used a celebrity endorser who was not previously well known to participants, in order to avoid bias that could arise from prior recognition of an already-familiar celebrity. The experimental stimulus was a print-style advertisement for a cosmetics product featuring this endorser; a cosmetics product was chosen because celebrity endorsement is a common and salient advertising strategy in this category, and the student sample was expected to have relevant purchase-related familiarity with cosmetics products. Consistent with established requirements for experimental research (Ruseffendi, 1994; Margono, 2005), this study compares outcomes using inferential statistical measures and addresses the following requirements: (1) random assignment of subjects to groups; (2) direct manipulation of one or more independent variables; (3) measurement of the dependent variable(s) as the outcome of the experiment; and (4) control over extraneous (non-experimental) variables. This study specifically implements a one-group posttest-only design: all 55 participants were exposed to the same experimental stimulus (the advertisement featuring the previously unfamiliar celebrity endorser), and the effects on advertising attitude and brand image were assessed through regression analysis rather than through comparison with an untreated or alternative-treatment control group. This design choice, and its implications for the strength of the causal claims discussed later in this article, is addressed in the Limitations section.

Variables

A research variable is an attribute, property, or value of a person, object, or activity that varies and is set by the researcher to be studied and from which conclusions are drawn, distinguished into independent and dependent variables (Sugiyono, 2012). The independent variable in this study is the celebrity endorser, denoted X1; the dependent variables are advertising attitude, denoted Y1, and brand image, denoted Y2 (Sunyoto, 2013). Control in the experimental design refers to variables held

constant so that the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variables is not confounded by external or unstudied factors.

Data Source, Population, and Sampling

Data were collected using a questionnaire. Participants were students of the Faculty of Economics at a public university in Indonesia, totaling 55 participants.

Measures, Instruments, or Analytical Protocol

All indicators for each variable were measured using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

A manipulation check was conducted to verify the experimental treatment and to examine the correlation of each variable across experimental groups. A manipulation check confirms that the independent variable was implemented at the intended level across the different experimental conditions (Sani & Todman, 2006). Manipulation is a defining characteristic of experimental research: by manipulating conditions, researchers can create circumstances that are rare or novel and unlikely to occur naturally. Although reporting a manipulation check is not strictly required in a journal article, presenting evidence that the manipulation was successfully implemented strengthens the credibility of the experiment as a test of a causal relationship and reinforces the interpretation of the results. Detailed manipulation-check statistics (e.g., pre-exposure familiarity scores) are not reported separately in this article; this is noted as a methodological limitation in the Limitations and Future Research section.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using regression analysis, which models the dependence of one or more independent variables on a dependent variable in order to estimate or predict the population mean based on the values of the independent variable(s); unlike correlation analysis, which only measures the strength of a linear relationship between two variables without distinguishing which is independent or dependent, regression analysis also determines the direction of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Partial significance was assessed using the t-test, which examines each independent variable's effect on each dependent variable separately, indicating how far an individual explanatory variable accounts for variation in the dependent variable. A hypothesis was accepted when the significance probability was below 0.05, and rejected when it was above 0.05. Because both hypotheses in this study specify a directional (positive) effect of celebrity endorser on the outcome variables, significance was assessed using a one-tailed test at $\alpha = 0.05$, consistent with standard practice for directional hypotheses in business and economic research (Kurniawan, 2014).

RESULTS

Before turning to hypothesis testing, the participant profile is briefly summarized. Consistent with the sampling frame of undergraduate students in the Faculty of Economics, the majority of participants were approximately 20 years of age, and women made up a larger share of the sample than men. These demographic patterns are referenced in the Discussion when interpreting subgroup differences in responses to the advertisement; precise counts and percentages are available from the corresponding author upon request. The results of hypothesis testing are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Relationship	β	Sig.	R ²	Result
H1: Celebrity Endorser (X1) → Advertising Attitude (Y1)	0.353	0.000	0.306	Supported
H2: Celebrity Endorser (X1) → Brand Image (Y2)	0.389	0.001	0.197	Supported

Source: Primary data (2019), processed by the researchers.

H1: Effect of celebrity endorser on advertising attitude.

As shown in Table 2, the path from celebrity endorser to advertising attitude has a beta coefficient of 0.353 and a significance value of 0.000, significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (one-tailed), with the significance value below the significance threshold. This indicates that celebrity endorsers have a positive and significant effect on advertising attitude; hypothesis 1 is therefore supported.

H2: Effect of celebrity endorser on brand image.

As shown in Table 2, the path from celebrity endorser to brand image has a beta coefficient of 0.389 and a significance value of 0.001, significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (one-tailed), with the significance value below the significance threshold. This indicates that celebrity endorsers have a positive and significant effect on brand image; hypothesis 2 is therefore supported.

DISCUSSION

Overall, the descriptive analysis indicates that respondents evaluated the study's variables favorably, reflected in the high proportion of "strongly agree" and "agree" responses across the variables. Each hypothesized relationship is discussed below.

Celebrity Endorser and Advertising Attitude

The finding that celebrity endorsers have a positive and significant effect on advertising attitude indicates that a more favorable celebrity endorser is associated with a more favorable attitude toward the advertisement. This result appears to reflect participants' view that an effective celebrity endorser must not only be visually appealing but must also possess skill in communicating the advertised product. The endorser's message delivery evidently affects consumer attitude, suggesting that the endorser functions not merely as an influencing factor but as a causal factor consistent with the study's findings: the endorser's physical attractiveness, credibility, and congruence with the advertised product all appear to shape consumer perception of the product being presented.

Participants also appeared to perceive the endorser as having communicated the advertisement effectively, in that their attitudinal response to the message was well received and understood. Greater exposure to the endorser's message across mass and electronic media may be expected to further reinforce a positive effect on the advertised product.

Across participant demographics, students around 20 years of age made up the largest share, consistent with the relatively narrow age range typical of an undergraduate student sample. By gender, female participants appeared more actively engaged, plausibly reflecting greater general interest in cosmetics-related content, such that the endorser's message carried particular influence over their attitude toward the advertisement; male participants, by contrast, appeared to focus more on the endorser's physical appearance, shaping their attitudinal response accordingly.

This finding is consistent with Chu et al. (2012), who similarly report that celebrity endorsers have a positive and significant effect on advertising attitude.

Celebrity Endorser and Brand Image

The finding that celebrity endorsers have a positive and significant effect on brand image indicates that a more favorable celebrity endorser is associated with a more favorable brand image. Participants appeared to evaluate the endorser not solely on appearance and attractiveness but also on communicative skill in presenting the product, together with the charisma the endorser projected; this combination appears to contribute to a favorable brand image formed through the endorser's manner of presenting and advertising the product. This suggests that the celebrity endorser was able to shape the product's brand image in a way that could influence participants' willingness to use the product. As with advertising attitude, greater exposure of the endorser's message across mass and electronic media may be expected to further strengthen the brand image of the promoted product.

Across participant demographics, students around 20 years of age again made up the largest share. By gender, female participants appeared to focus first on brand image and then on the endorser, plausibly reflecting that, as cosmetics users, they evaluate a product's brand image before attending to who endorses it.

This finding is consistent with Wijanarko et al. (2016), who similarly report that celebrity endorsers have a positive and significant effect on brand image.

Theoretical Implications

These findings extend the celebrity-endorsement literature by demonstrating, under controlled experimental conditions with an endorser unfamiliar to participants, that endorser effects on advertising attitude and brand image are not solely attributable to pre-existing recognition or fame. This lends support to source-credibility and source-attractiveness perspectives on endorsement, suggesting that perceived communicative competence and congruence between endorser and product—rather than familiarity alone—are meaningful mechanisms through which celebrity endorsement shapes consumer response.

Practical Implications

For marketers and advertising practitioners, these findings suggest that endorser selection should weigh communicative skill and product-relevant credibility alongside physical attractiveness, since participants' responses were shaped by how well the endorser conveyed the product message rather than appearance alone. The demographic patterns observed further suggest that advertising strategies may benefit from tailoring endorser presentation to the target audience's gender-related priorities—for example, emphasizing brand-relevant cues for audiences who prioritize brand image, and emphasizing endorser delivery and appeal for audiences more responsive to the endorser directly. Increasing the reach of endorser-led advertising across mass and electronic media may further reinforce both advertising attitude and brand image.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, although the study is described using experimental terminology, it used a one-group posttest-only design without an untreated or alternative-treatment control group; the reported effects should therefore be interpreted as associations observed under a controlled single-condition exposure rather than as effects validated through between-group comparison. Detailed manipulation-check statistics were also not separately reported, which limits independent verification that the endorser-unfamiliarity manipulation was implemented as intended. Future experimental studies on this topic should include a control or comparison condition (for example, a familiar celebrity endorser or a no-endorser control) and report full manipulation-check statistics. The sample was limited to 55 students from a single faculty at one university, which may limit generalizability, and the study measured only the indicators of celebrity endorser, advertising attitude, and brand image already established in prior literature. Future research is encouraged to: (1) draw on this study as a reference for teaching and further

research in marketing, particularly regarding celebrity endorsers, advertising attitude, and brand image; and (2) incorporate additional indicators beyond those used here, so as to develop further items that can more fully represent celebrity endorser, advertising attitude, and brand image.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and hypothesis testing presented above, the celebrity endorser exerts a strong effect on both advertising attitude and brand image. The celebrity endorser variable simultaneously and significantly affects advertising attitude and brand image for the advertised product, reflected in participants' generally favorable response to the advertisement conveyed by the endorser and in the favorable brand image formed, as evidenced by the high proportion of "strongly agree" and "agree" responses across the study's variables.

More specifically, celebrity endorsers have a positive and significant effect on advertising attitude: a more favorable celebrity endorser is associated with a more favorable participant attitude toward the advertisement, and the endorser demonstrated an ability to communicate the advertisement in a way that was well received. Celebrity endorsers also have a positive and significant effect on brand image: a more favorable celebrity endorser is associated with a more favorable brand image, indicating that the endorser was able to help shape the product's brand image and, in turn, influence participants' willingness to use the product. In both respects, greater exposure of the endorser's message across mass and electronic media may be expected to further strengthen these effects.

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