



The Impact of Celebrity Credibility on Purchase Intention of Cosmetic Products: The Moderating Role of Ethnocentrism

Fatima Zohra Chekima^{1*}, Syed Azizi Wafa Syed Khalid Wafa¹
and Rini Suryati Sulong¹

¹Faculty of Business, Economics & Accountancy, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Jalan UMS, 88400, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author FZC designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and first draft of the manuscript. Authors SAWSKW and RSS managed the analyses of the study. Author RSS managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/AJEBA/2018/41283

Editor(s):

(1) Ivan Markovic, Faculty of Economics, University of Nis, Serbia.

Reviewers:

(1) Husein Mohamed Irbad, Lincoln University College, Malaysia.

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(3) Rajeshwari Malik, Maharaja Surajmal Institute, India.

(4) Jacob Shenje, Zimbabwe.

Complete Peer review History: <http://www.sciencedomain.org/review-history/24873>

Review Article

Received 13th March 2018

Accepted 21st May 2018

Published 30th May 2018

ABSTRACT

Globalization has led to an increased competition as firms expand their coverage including various domestic and international markets. Therefore, the cosmetic industry has been growing and expanding around the world in both developed and developing countries. As a result, customers have a growing selection of purchase options, including an increasing proportion of foreign products and brands. It is clear that there is a need for better understanding of the factors that determine the choice of consumers of domestic and foreign products in different market settings. One of the strategies that are used by companies to differentiate their cosmetic products is through celebrity endorsement. Despite the popular advertising technique of using celebrity endorsement, market researchers and advertisers have not agreed as to which celebrity source characteristics are most

*Corresponding author: E-mail: fatima9193@yahoo.com;

effective in influencing consumers' purchase intention of the endorsed products or brands. Other than that, another important factor that affects consumers' purchase intention is the consumer ethnocentrism level. Consumers in different countries have different preference over local and international products. Thus, the objective of this paper is to propose a suitable approach and develop a conceptual framework to examine the factors influencing the purchase intention of cosmetic products. This study will investigate the characteristics of the celebrity endorser that will have either positive or negative influence on consumers through the source credibility model (expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness). Moreover, this study will also examine the moderating role of ethnocentrism of consumers to ensure whether it is more suitable to hire a local celebrity or international celebrity. The finding of this study could help cosmetic products marketers to design more suitable ads in terms of celebrity characteristics and understand the role of consumer ethnocentrism in the consumer's decision making.

Keywords: Cosmetic products; theory of source credibility; purchase intention; consumer ethnocentrism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to market globalization, more firms worldwide small or big, embrace international marketing as a business expansion approach that is achievable. There has been an overabundance of goods and services either foreign or locally produced, available in the market. One of the industries is the cosmetic industry which has been growing and expanding around the world in both developing and developed countries. This phenomenon opens the doors for those interested in the business to promote their cosmetic products, the continued growth and evolution of the cosmetic industry offer good opportunities [1]. According to the U.S. Commercial Service [2], Asia Pacific market value has increased to further than US\$ 70billion, which makes it as the second highest after the Western European market. Asian cosmetics industry has become one of the fastest emerging markets.

Consumers' interest in cosmetics has been affected by heavy marketing, advertisements, and the growing affluence which increased their attraction to high-quality brands. According to the U.S. Commercial Service [2], Malaysia's market for cosmetics and toiletries has a growth rate of 13% per year. In Malaysia, there are more than 60,000 kinds of cosmetics available in the local market [1]. A global study found that TV advertising featuring celebrities is typically used in each country, even though there are great differences in preference between countries [3]. Lately, the number of celebrities promoting the brand through different online environments are increasing [4]. According to Praet [3], celebrity endorsement is noticeably more common in Asian countries than in Europe and United States

(US). This was proved by a comparison of 6, 359 TV advertisements carried out cross-national from 25 countries, which the results showed that celebrity endorsements were used in the advertisements in Asia which was in South Korea and China, ranged from 61% to 25% respectively, while in European countries endorsers were used in less than 15% of advertisements.

In order to stand out of the chaos and give a matchless and important position in the minds of consumers, some companies enter deals with celebrities [5]. These companies then hire these celebrities as endorsers or spokespersons to publicize and market the company's ideas, products, or services. In modern marketing, celebrity endorsement has become chart-topping [6,7]. Moreover, according to O'Mahony and Meenaghan [8], marketers believe that celebrities would be able to attract the attention of consumers towards the endorsed products and could transmit their image values to the product involved by virtue of their celebrity profile and engaging attributes therefore, marketers would invest high amount of asset to align the products with the well-known celebrities. Celebrity endorsements enjoy enduring fame as a way to improve marketing communications [9].

The underlying reason for using celebrity is that it would affect the consumer purchase intention through the phenomena that marketers think that the consumers attention towards the message could be drawn by celebrities' profile and attributes via rub-off effects would transmit the image values into a message communication [10, 8,11,12]. In fact, according to Tan [13], companies in Malaysia are spending millions on celebrity endorsements. McCracken [7] proposed

an example of meaning transfer process are celebrity endorsement. The meaning is allocated in the social and also the physical world established through the fundamental culture. Then by using fashion and advertising systems, consumer goods are transferred, and next towards the consumer's lives through the efforts of consumers. Therefore in this transfer, celebrity endorsement plays an important role.

Given the factors above, it can be said that the decision making in selecting a celebrity endorser is a challenging, uncertain and important decision. Choosing a celebrity that is recognized as credible could be a way in reducing the risk that could be faced, this is because many of the empirical evidence has revealed that a celebrity which is more persuasive will be a more credible source [14,15,16,17,18,19,20]. Despite the popular advertising technique of using celebrity endorsement, market researchers and advertisers have not agreed as to which celebrity source characteristics are most effective in influencing consumers' purchase intention of the endorsed products or brands. This is because consumers in different countries have dissimilar preference over the characteristics of the endorser. Moreover, there is a limited research done to date on how consumers' purchase intention is influenced by celebrity endorsement and which characteristics are more important when choosing an endorser.

As organizations grow into international markets, there would be many crucial decisions to be taken which would have a significant impact on the performance globally. Some of the crucial decisions alternatives include the entry modes, promotion, marketing and advertising, production locations and others. Consumer product evaluations could be affected significantly through the selections of particular strategic alternatives. One of the important factors that affect consumers during decision making is the consumer ethnocentrism level. Based on Shimp and Sharma [21], the ethnocentrism of consumers emphasizes on the rightness and morality in buying foreign products and the loyalty to locally produced goods. Furthermore, consumer ethnocentrism predictive ability of the buying intention varies from country to country [22]. The basis of this theory could be traced to Sumner's [23] basic concept of ethnocentrism that is "the interpretation of things which is one's own group as the main of everything and any others are evaluated based on it".

Generally, consumers have a higher quality view towards the local products as compared to foreign products in a developed country. Therefore, this would increase the encouragement of consumer ethnocentrism towards the acceptance of local products and rejection of foreign products [24]. However, the opposite has been observed in developing countries such as in Turkey and Romania [25], China [26], and India [27]. The consumers in these developing countries recognize the foreign products, especially those produced in more advanced countries, as having greater quality as compared to the local products. This is also the same on the ethnocentrism consumers which would perceive non-locally produced products as having better quality, particularly if the country of origin has a better image [28]. This situation has posed confusing effect and implication about ethnocentrism in marketing and consumer behavior studies [29].

According to Brodowsky [30], individuals or consumers would have a positive view and assumption towards purchasing goods that are produced locally if the level of ethnocentrism is high. Pecotich and Rosenthal [31] as well discovered that consumer's opinions in regards to the price and purchase intentions are directly affected by consumer ethnocentrism. Therefore, it is beneficial for researchers, marketers and advertisers to identify the level of ethnocentrism among consumers so that they can better appeal or meet customer needs and wants.

Furthermore, Wong et al. [29], stated that though globalization proposes the world is becoming more alike, understated dissimilarities may have extensive consequences for practice, therefore, it is still the case that marketers need to comprehend this phenomenon within each market. Ethnocentrism dimensions might not be relevant globally, but it could be significant in some contexts, or at least the significance differs worldwide. Nevertheless, previous studies emphasized that more studies are necessary to examine the effect of consumers' ethnocentrism tendencies related with purchase intention due to the unpredictable results found earlier [29]. Moreover, according to some past research, the nationality of the endorser would have an impact on the purchase intention and the preference of local or international celebrity endorser difference between countries [32,33,34]. Therefore, the authors included the ethnocentrism of consumers in the framework to determine which nationality is more preferred by the Malaysian consumers.

This research is also supported by previous research suggestion to examine the role of consumer ethnocentrism in moderating the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers in international markets [35].

2. UNDERPINNING THEORY

The Source Credibility Theory opposes that the value of a message could be affected by the endorser's recognition level of attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness [36,37]. The degree that the resource is known as having significant experience or sufficient knowledge to not present a biased decision is referred to as credibility [8]. Research findings showed that source credibility is crucial to the success of celebrity endorsement [38]. According to Ohanian [39], source credibility is usually utilized to attract attention to the positive characteristics of communicators which would influence the receiver's acknowledgment of the communication.

Researchers stated that the level of persuasion of a message mostly rests on the credibility of the source [40,37,41]. Studies have been carried out to examine the effectiveness of the endorser. These studies have recommended that consumers' brand recall and motivation to purchase could be increased through good endorsement efforts [42,43]. In today's greatly crowded environment, celebrity endorsers use their popularity not only to work to generate and retain attention, they also achieve a high rate of recall rates for marcom messages [16,17,37,8].

In addition due to globalization, consumers now can easily switch between brands and products as compared to the past, since there are increased levels of competition and diversity in the cosmetics industry. Therefore, researchers of the theory of product differentiation [25,44,45,39,46] agree that firms may face less competition by distinguishing themselves from others. While the quality of services, brands and/or marketing campaigns associated with celebrities does not guarantee profit [47] recent studies have shown that celebrity endorsement leads to a favorable approach towards the credibility of the endorsed brand [48] and the endorsed product [43]. Moreover, it would be effective to use endorser from the credible source towards consumers which have an undesirable interpretation of the product [49]. Therefore, the credible source can neutralize these opinions and have a positive outcome which is a greater message acceptance [50].

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

3.1 Attractiveness

According to McCroskey and McCain [51], attractiveness is associated with how celebrity is perceived and the social values. Celebrity physical appearance, the resemblance to the receiver and personality are the factors included in social values [47,52,53,36]. Consumers may see celebrities as more attractive when they have much in common. Based on Bardia et al. [54], celebrity physical attractiveness is interrelated to a person's earliest judgment passed on to next individual, that is driven by the characteristics and qualities of the celebrity endorser for example weight, height and facial beauty.

In order to increase the acknowledgment or consciousness towards a product or service, celebrity endorsement could be utilized as an important variable [55,56]. Endorsers "which are considered attractive will be more likely to lead the consumer purchase intention" [57]. When endorsers are compared in terms of attractiveness factor, consumers are more influenced by attractive endorsers compared to less attractive ones [58,59]. Therefore, effective messages can be created through an important factor which is attractiveness [60]. Moreover based on Van der Waldt [57] even though in a cluttered media environment, it is recognized that celebrities which are attractive have the 'stopping power' and are more attractive to consumers.

Therefore, physical attractiveness of celebrity could be utilized to enhance the effectiveness of an advertisement [61,46,43,62]. Previous researchers found that physically unattractive endorsers are less favored compared to their physically attractive counterparts [63,58]. Furthermore, through celebrity endorser's attractiveness, a brand perception image can be significantly improved [54,48,64]. If celebrities' physical attractiveness is congruent with the product endorsed, consumers develop a positive attitude towards the product and the advertisement evaluations [59].

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between attractiveness and cosmetic product purchase intention.

3.2 Expertise

Expertise has been described by McCracken [7] as “the perceived ability of the source to make valid assertions”. In other words, the endorser is considered to be competent enough to deliver legal and precise information or deliberate on a particular subject [40]. An endorser that is more persuasive is found to have a higher level of expertise [65,54] and would create higher purchase intention [61,66,37].

Research has shown that receiver’s purchasing decision and perceived trustworthiness could be impacted by source expertise in the product or service [67]. Likewise, Praet [3] state that endorsement persuasion in advertising functional and pricey brands, endorser’s expertise emerges as the most effective construct. Thus, it is less effective to use conventional messages and advertorials transferred by the organization than to use a celebrity or athlete with relevant expertise as an endorser [42]. Besides, according to the results of the study by Lin et al., [34] between credibility, there is an important link in terms of expertise and purchase intention.

Moreover, Speck, Schumann and Thompson [68] discovered that celebrities which have expertise would develop higher remembrance of product information compared to non-celebrity; however, the distinction was not statistically significant. More particularly, favorable attitude towards the brand could be led through more solid facts on the product offering that is provided by the expertise of the celebrity [69]. These component of source expertise is critical in conceptualizing credibility and appeared to be persuasive in influencing consumers [20,41,70] also in impacting their behavior [71,72]. Therefore according to Daneshvary and Schwer [49], a most essential segment for endorsement to be effective is expertise as acknowledged.

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between expertise and cosmetic product purchase intention.

3.3 Trustworthiness

According to some researchers, trustworthiness is defined as the perceived enthusiasm of the celebrity to make legal declarations in the view of the consumer and provides information in a genuine, just, truthful, and honorable manner [40,7,73,39]. As O'Mahony and Meenaghan [8] mentioned, trust is the credibility of the source to

create the basic features of the effects of changes in consumer attitude. Without trust, the other properties owned by the endorser cannot be effective in changing consumer attitudes [74]. Components of trust is important in the concept of credibility also has been proved to be effective in encouraging consumers [44,20,41,70] and the inspiration of attitude [71,72]. This is in line with Atkin and Block [75], which suggest that celebrities are accepted as more reliable than non-celebrity.

According to Wei and Li [38], the findings of their study show that the source trustworthiness also affects consumers’ behavioral intentions. Chao et al. [35] also support the positive effect of trustworthiness on celebrity endorsement effectiveness. Therefore, celebrity trustworthiness is an important factor to advertisers. The most effective and suitable approach to make customers more self-assured regarding the product is through creating a level of trustworthiness [48,39]. According to the study by Shimp [76], a celebrity that has feature higher trustworthiness, relevance and honesty is more favorable by marketers. In addition, the good belief towards celebrities can have a good effect on the perception of customers’ value and further affect their purchasing choice [77].

Clearly, a positive relationship occurs among the trustworthiness, attraction and products associated with the strength of the argument; for instance, when strong product-related arguments mark the advertising copy, the effect of trustworthiness is less noticeable than it is for weak product-related arguments [61,50]. According to Smith [67], the messages that are shared by untrustworthy celebrity endorsers will be viewed questionably by consumers regardless of the celebrities’ other qualities. Therefore, it is necessary that the endorser that is going to be chosen should be an individual whom consumers can relate to and is recognized as real, unbiased and honest [5].

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between trustworthiness and cosmetic product purchase intention.

3.4 Ethnocentrism

Accordingly, Luque-Martinez et al. [78] mentioned that ethnocentrism symbolizes a worldwide tendency to perceive an individual’s own group as the midpoint of the universe, hence blindly accepting those which are culturally

similar and rejecting those individuals which are ethnically different. Ethnocentrism is a term consist of the words “ethnic” meaning group, while “centrism” which means focused [79].

Consumers’ behavior differentiates among those with strong and weak signs of ethnocentrism [21]. For high ethnocentric consumers, national loyalty is seen as an important issue, as this influences these consumers to choose domestic products or services [80]. In contrast, low ethnocentric consumers prefer foreign products compared to domestic products [81], and have a lesser sense of belonging to the group. As the reflection of love for the country, a person is committed and always ready to sacrifice for the sake of the country [82]. Emotional attachment to the homeland guides the belief that the country is superior in most aspects [83].

Based on Luque-Martinez et al. [78], the feelings of consumer concerning foreign products have been an issue of great concern. This interest has been reinforced because of the expanding internationalization of markets and greater globalization rivalry among products and services, also as a result of new “global scenario” that makes consumers feel more related with their traditional identities and ethnicity [45,84].

Nevertheless, the response of ethnocentric consumer is not always in such an extreme means. Some consumers which are extremely ethnocentric would be having a lower concern for the information of the product regarding the country of origin [85]. This occurs in cases in which the observation of the product is related to the decent image of the country (level of industrialization, political situation, economic development, or admiration for the country), non-local products will be assessed highly [28]. Accordingly, a buyer might be ethnocentric concerning certain items for which domestic production is clearly better than that of foreign products, yet in the meantime he/she might not have a negative approach towards other products in which his/her nation is obviously lacking or is obviously far from offering the levels of quality that foreign countries provide.

H4a: Consumer ethnocentrism moderates the relationship between attractiveness and cosmetic product purchase intention.

H4b: Consumer ethnocentrism moderates the relationship between expertise and cosmetic product purchase intention.

H4c: Consumer ethnocentrism moderates the relationship between trustworthiness and cosmetic product purchase intention.

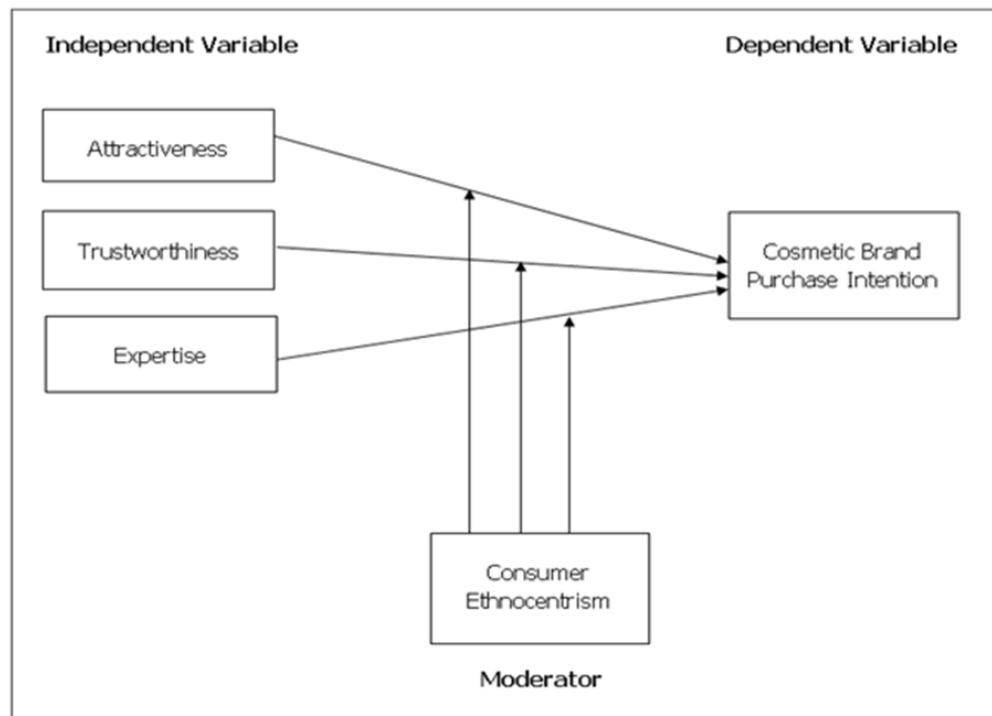


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework

4. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As the global market has been expanding, advertising has been widely used by marketers to differentiate their product from others. One of the advertising technique chosen is using celebrity endorsers. Moreover, since the market is becoming more markets are expanding towards different countries, the consumer ethnocentrism is becoming an important factor to be given attention when expanding internationally. Therefore, this paper has included several preceding types of research concerning the source credibility of celebrity endorsers through the purchase intention of consumers. Additionally, consumer ethnocentrism has also been included as the moderator in this paper. Thus, this discussion guided us towards the conceptual framework presented in Figure 1. Through this framework, future research could use other products and compare products and different countries to better understand and improve the celebrity endorsement and consumer ethnocentrism level.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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