

## **Celebrity endorser and respondents gender: Its impact on company, behavioral and attitudinal variables**

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### **Abstract**

*The use of and literature on celebrity endorsers is extensive. Nevertheless there is limited study on the impact of such use to a company's image by respondent's gender and replication of past findings in a Malaysian context. This study utilizes a factorial design to measure the interaction of the use of celebrity endorser and target market reaction by gender and its impact on the company, behavioral and attitudinal variables. The findings show no significant difference for all variables between advertisements that have a celebrity endorser and those that don't, except for attitude towards the company for female respondents. There were weak overall interaction effects for the variables attitude towards the company and word of mouth. Behavioral responses were consistently lowest. Highest was attitudinal variables followed by attitude towards the company.*

**Keywords:** Attitudinal, Behavioral, Celebrity Endorser, Company, Gender, Malaysia

### **Introduction**

Many studies with regards to celebrity endorsers, researchers have included the issue of demographics (Atkins and Block, 1983; Kanungo and Pang, 1973). Nevertheless, many of these studies on celebrity endorser have looked at the issue of gender, but from the perspective of the celebrity themselves and not of the respondents gender specifically (Freiden, 1984; Sawatari, 2006). The increase of celebrity endorser based advertising over the recent years begs the question as to the impact on the different respondent gender towards the use of celebrity endorsers.

The use of celebrities in advertisements has been rapidly increasing, as it is believed to contribute substantial positive impact on financial returns for the companies that use them (Endorgan, 2001). In 1975, only 15% of prime time TV advertising featured celebrities (Forkan, 1975). In 1978, it went up to 20%, and approximately 10% of the dollars spent on TV advertising featured celebrities (Anonymous, 1978; Sherman, 1985). A recent estimates approximately 25 percent of American commercials in year 2000 use celebrity endorsers (Shimp, 2000), in other words, one out of four commercials features a celebrity.

Many businesses believe that an advertisement delivered by a celebrity provides a higher degree of appeal, attention, recall and possibly purchase compared to those without celebrities (Cooper, 1984; Dean and Biswas, 2001). Yet not many studies are conducted to test if the celebrity advertisement appeal carries on towards both male and female, or only towards a particular gender. Companies must understand that the fees for celebrity talent can be substantial, cost of national advertising, especially on television, is extremely high, and the type of spokesperson affects the levels of awareness and recall (Freiden, 1984; Friedman and Friedman, 1979).

The literature has shown a considerable interest regarding factors that could help to establish the positive relationship, between celebrity endorsers and the products. Research indicates that celebrity endorsements can result in more favorable advertisement ratings and product evaluations (Cooper, 1984; Dean and Biswas, 2001) and advertisement featuring celebrity figures consistently produce more

favorable impact than the non-celebrity advertisements (Atkins and Block, 1983). Nonetheless, it is clear that there is gender based purchasing, which should be taken into account when utilizing a celebrity endorser (Aiken, 1963; Gentry and Doering, 1977; Vitz and Johnston, 1965).

This paper explores the issue of company image, attitudinal and behavioral variables from the viewpoint of different gender. This is done by assessing the reactions of respondents to advertising utilizing a celebrity endorser against one that does not in a multicultural Asian country, namely Malaysia. It is hypothesized that advertisements with a celebrity endorser would have a positive effect on targeted respondents (in this case, female respondents). The results have important implications for advertising campaigns that utilize celebrities as means of communication. The implications are as relevant for firms that choose a celebrity endorser strategy as for those that prefer not to. This paper is presented in five sections. The first provides an introduction to the matter at hand and an account of the literature. The second section of the article describes the methodology used. The third section provides the findings and the fourth provides a discussion of it. The article ends with our proposed further direction in this area of study and implications for management and academicians.

## **Review of the literature**

### ***Gender***

Gender is a common demographic variable, used in nearly every study, yet never fully utilized in various researches aside from the casual mention in the respondent profile. Gender commonly refers to the physical attributes that differentiate men and women (Anonymous, 2006). Nevertheless, within social sciences, it is more of a social construction rather than a limited biological definition. This involves various social constructs, which entails culture-bound roles, behaviors and conventions, as well as relationships between the male and female sexes (Anonymous, 2006; Krieger, 2001).

Previous studies indicate that females had different traits than men. The general feminine trait included caring for others, compromising, indulging in negotiations and conflict resolution as well as relationship building. Men were credited with different traits, such as advancement, success and leadership (Hofstede, 1980, 1991). Others have found that men have a stronger tendency to be more materialistic, and are generally more interested in external validation, whereas women are often not inclined to stand out or be noticed (O’Cass and McEwen, 2004; Tse *et al.*, 1989).

The past notions of women are fast being replaced. Women are involved in management and business, to the point where it is fashionable to study them (Eagly and Johnson, 1990). There are six women at the helm of *Fortune* 500 corporations (Jones, 2003). They are also becoming a market force to reckon with. MYTHs or Mommy with Traveling Husband category, is estimated to be over 3 million consumers in 2005 in the USA, creating demand for late night deliveries, Mommy entertainment, and drive through salads (Potvin, 2006). Their spending is also strong, and women have experienced a 14% increase in their real income levels as compared to 4% for men (Francese, 2006).

There are various studies that have looked at differences between men and women in areas such as coupon use (Harmon and Hill, 2003), web advertising (Wolin and Korgaonkar, 2003), and service quality (Snipes, 2006). Researchers have found gender differences in consumption behavior for interior design (Aiken, 1963), cigarette consumption (Vitz and Johnston, 1965), leisure activities (Gentry and Doering, 1977), Christmas shopping (Fisher and Arnold, 1990), beer and jeans consumption (Worth *et al.*, 1992) and even hair spray products (Morris and Cundiff, 1971). Other interesting findings include an opinion that women are far more influenced by experts and expert advertising than their male counterparts (Aronson, 1972) women to be more fashion conscious, as well as bigger spenders than men (Goldsmith *et al.*, 1993), and women have been shown to score higher on opinion leadership and fashion innovativeness than men (Stith and Goldsmith, 1989).

### ***Celebrity Endorser***

Advertising has a long history, from oral to print to the current electronic media. Companies used various objects in their advertisements, from cartoons to animals in order to get the message across. The use of human models has been advocated as it could provoke attitudinal and emotional reactions (Kanungo and Pang, 1973). Therefore humans who are placed as models and are seen as in support of the advertiser and / or its claim are known as endorsers (Tellis, 1998). The term “celebrity” refers to an ‘individual who is known to the public, such as actors, sport figures, entertainers’ and others of the like

for his or her achievement in areas other than that of the product class endorsed (Friedman and Friedman, 1979:63). Others have defined celebrity endorsement as any individual with public recognition who uses this recognition for a product by appearing in an advertisement for it (McCracken, 1989). Celebrities in this modern day and age may also be an animated character like Fred Flintstone, or an animal (Miciak and Shanklin, 1994). Therefore by utilizing celebrity endorsers, companies may tap into consumer's symbolic association to an aspirational reference groups, as they (celebrity endorsers) are perceived as dynamic, attractive and likable (Assael, 1984; Atkins and Block, 1983; Kamins, 1990).

There are numerous studies on celebrity endorsers both in the academic literature (Endorgan, 2001) (Atkins and Block, 1983; Friedman *et al.*, 1977) as well as trade journals (Anonymous, 1989, 1996). Most of the studies have tended to show the efficiency of celebrity endorsements (Cooper, 1984; Dean and Biswas, 2001, Atkins and Block, 1983; Friedman *et al.*, 1977) or the identification of factors used in order to choose appropriate celebrities (Dholakia and Sternthal, 1977, Lafferty *et al.*, 2002). Very few try to explain why in some cases, celebrity endorsement just don't work (Misra and Beatty, 1990).

Several factors have been identified to measure the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers. Among the many ways to measure the effectiveness were the use of high versus low credible sources used in advertisements had been found to positively affect a purchase intention (Dholakia and Sternthal, 1977). Other studies have cited the dimensions of source credibility. These include trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness (Dholakia and Sternthal, 1977), familiarity, similarity, liking and physical attractiveness (Maddux and Rogers, 1980). Endorser credibility (trustworthiness and expertise) and corporate credibility (identity) have been mainly used as independent variables and consumer attitudes as dependent variables in most studies. This neglects the impact of celebrity endorser on the company.

A numbers of researchers have used models in which source credibility, typically viewed as a function of trustworthiness and expertise; is the primary factor determining how influential the endorser will be (Lafferty and Goldsmith, 1999; Lafferty *et al.*, 2002; Ohanian, 1991). A celebrity endorser should score particularly well on dimensions such as trustworthiness, believability, persuasiveness and likeability (Freiden, 1984). The use of celebrity endorser has been shown to be more effective for product high in psychological or social risk, involving such elements as good taste, self-image and opinion of others (Friedman and Friedman, 1979).

A celebrity endorser could lead to higher believability, a more favorable evaluation of the product advantage and a significantly higher intention to purchase (Friedman and Friedman, 1979). A famous person can shape the perception of the brand by virtue of the inferences that consumers make based on the knowledge they have about the famous person (Assael, 1984; Atkins and Block, 1983; Kamins, 1990). It can also break through the clutter of advertisements and reach directly to those that identify with the celebrity thus allowing psychographics segmentation (Sayal, 2006).

Nevertheless, many commercials using such endorsers do not live up to the advertisers' expectations (Miciak and Shanklin, 1994). Not only the negative information about a celebrity can have detrimental effects on the products they endorse (Louie and Obermiller, 2002), the effectiveness of the endorsements might vary in effectiveness depending on the factors like 'fit' between the celebrity and the endorsed product (Till and Shimp, 1998). Other effects include vampirism, where an audience can remember only the celebrity but not the brand (Anonymous, 2002; Evans, 1988). There is also always the possibility of negative effect due to multiple endorsement programs by a single celebrity (Tripp *et al.*, 1994).

### ***The Meaning Transfer Model***

McCracken (1989) explained the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers by assessing the meanings that the consumer associated with the endorser and eventually transfer to the brand by suggesting a three stages meaning transfer model. First, when a celebrity endorses a product in an advertisement, the audience forms associations. The meaning associated with the famous person moves from the endorser to the product or brand. The meaning attribute to the celebrity becomes associated with the brand in consumer's mind. Eventually, in the consumption phase, the meaning is transferred from the product to the consumers.

Stage three explicitly showed the importance of consumer decisions in the process of transferring the meaning to brand or company. This is an interesting part as there is neither automatic transfer of meaning nor any automatic transformation of the self. Consumer must claim the meanings then work with them. As the celebrity provides certain meanings in material form, consumers are keen to build a self from them.

The concern here is the audience or consumer. The main objective of the marketing communication programs is to touch the audience hearts and minds while creating an image of success and prosperity for them when they use the products. Hence, the communication programs chose must convey the information in the form, space, and time that audience expects. And it needs to make them feel good about themselves and their life, in general. This idea is shared by Kambitsis *et al.* (2002), who found that the personality of athletes as being an important factor in influencing specific target groups where the personalities are easily recognize and much admired.

Celebrity spokespersons are useful in marketing because they provide a set of characteristics that supports consumers in evaluating the presented brand (Martin, 1996). Hence, it is important for company to select the celebrity who has the appropriate response from consumers. In the case of high-involvement situation, celebrities were found to be appropriate, especially where the social and psychological risks are perceived to be high (Atkins and Block, 1983; Friedman and Friedman, 1978).

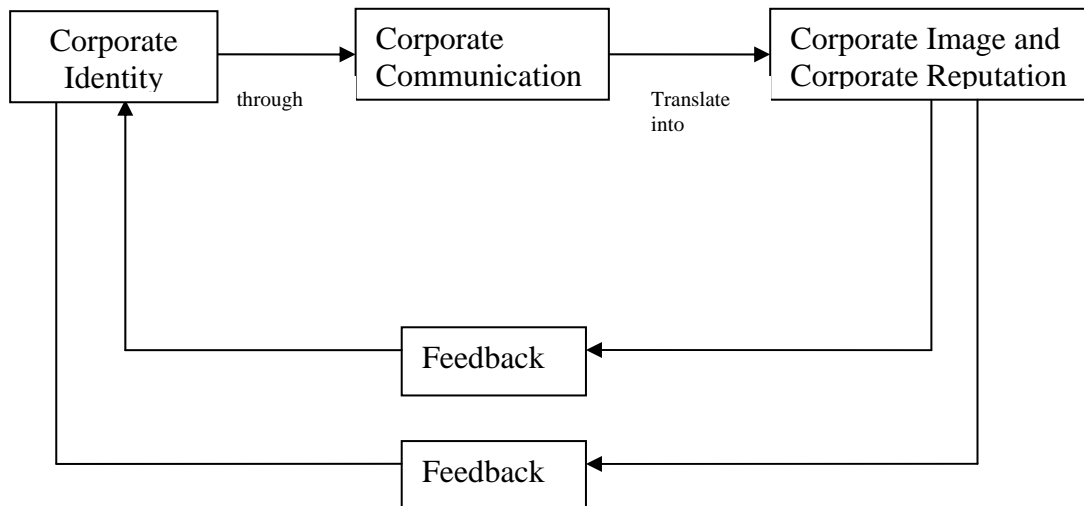
### ***Image transference and Corporate Image***

Celebrities play roles and these roles carry meaning. The image that the celebrity holds carries the meanings (McCracken, 1989). When a consumer sees a celebrity endorsing a product, the consumer recognizes the essential similarity between the message, product, and celebrity and transfers the meanings of that celebrity to the product (Tom *et al.*, 1992). The consumer must then make an effort to take possession of the meaning and place them in the construction of their own self-image (McCracken, 1989).

Corporate image refers to how a corporation is perceived. It is the effigy that people have of a company (Anonymous, 2000). In other word, a company image is the total impression that the entity makes on the minds of individuals (Ditcher, 1985). Sometimes, it is seen as the image associated with the name of an organization (Gatewood *et al.*, 1993). It functions vary from consumer choice (Dowling, 1988), through job selection (Gatewood *et al.*, 1993), to control and anticipation of rivals' movements within an industry (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Herbig and Milewitz, 1993; Weigelt and Camerer, 1988). Clearly, it is a combination of thoughts, feeling, and beliefs, opinions people have about a company, the products and services. Typically, a corporate image typically can be fashioned fairly quickly through specific actions and well-conceived communication programs (Anonymous, 2000).

Corporate image is in the eye of the receiver and is the mental picture that an audience has of an organization through the accumulation of all received messages (Ind, 1997). It does not just happen when the organization devices to launch a corporate advertising campaign, it occurs all the time through the actions of individuals, comments in the media and the consumption of products and services. Therefore, corporate image is not totally controllable by the company. The aims for any organization is to exert as much credible influence over that relationship as possible, so that the corporate image is appropriate to the company, supportable by the corporate culture, relevant to the corporate strategy and clear and consistent. In other words, a positive image has many facets- good signage, a clean and well-organized operation, an efficient and committed staff or even the uniforms can be one of the most effective building blocks in creating and building a better company image (McConaughy, 1995).

The relationship between corporate image and identity is shown in Figure 1. The process involves fashioning a positive identity and communicates it to significant audience in such a way that they will generate positive attitudes towards the company. The feedback loops in the model showed the image and reputation of an organization can be changed by monitored the corporate identity as well as the corporate communication strategy. As noted earlier, corporate image can be fashioned fairly quickly through specific marketing communication programs, corporate reputation evolves over time as a result of consistent performance and reinforced by communication programs.



**Figure 1: Corporate Image Model**

In many cases, advertisements are used specifically to attract attention to and influence beliefs about a product or the organization (Vough and Corley, 2004). Research shows favorable increase in respondents' perceived corporate image through high exposure to specific advertising campaign (Grass *et al.*, 1972). As such, when an organization utilizes a celebrity endorser, this is then tied in with the corporate image of the company in the minds of the audience.

Previous research has focused on the impact of corporate and endorser credibility on respondents' attitudes and purchase intentions or to advertisement and brands (Lafferty *et al.*, 2002). Corporate image and endorser credibility are both methodologically used as independent variable and yet there is little or no research looking into how endorser can have impact on corporate image, which can be fashioned fairly quickly through specific marketing communication programs.

While prior research cited that firm value tends to increase upon the announcement of celebrity contracts (Agrawal and Kamakura, 1995; Mathur and Mathur, 1996), it is unclear whether any type of relationship exists between celebrity endorser and company image or even between the audience and the company. Secondly, number of studies have been conducted on the relationship between celebrity endorsement and consumers' intention to purchase (Friedman and Friedman, 1979; Ohanian, 1991). However, consumer's high intention to buy a product must not necessary stem from a favorable image of the product but may be caused by other mediating factors, such as price and availability. Even if the high intention to purchase is from favorable product image, will the favorable image be applicable to the whole company.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a multi-stage research format. Preliminary design decisions included the choice of product, celebrity endorser, and the advertising design. The choice of product, beauty care products, was based on three criteria: usage by all groups, ease of manipulation of different advertisements, and the ability for respondents to recognize the celebrity endorser. Two different sets of questionnaires were distributed to respondents, one with celebrity endorser and the other one without. Each respondent only saw one type of advertisement. The celebrity chosen (Fauziah Latiff) was based on her popularity and establishment in the local Malaysian entertainment industry. Both advertisements were presented in exactly the same advertisement in terms of product type, brief description of the ingredients, product benefits and usage instruction with the only difference of having a celebrity endorser in one of the advertisement while the other did not.

Pre-tests were carried out among students from two universities in Malaysia. They were shown various advertisements and answered a simple questionnaire to determine if they were aware of the advertisement, celebrity endorser, and company in the advertisement. This acted as the basis for the celebrity and advertisement chosen for the study. The advertisement chosen was for cosmetics, so that

a clear targeting towards female respondents could be established and therefore allow for comparison between male and female respondents.

A total of 397 respondents from two universities in the state of Sabah and Sarawak, Malaysia, participated in the main study. Subjects were selected on the basis of opportunity and availability. Respondents answered the questionnaire after they had seen only one of the two print advertisements for a beauty care product. A factorial research design was employed, with approximately half of respondents were targeted groups and half was not, seeing advertisements with or without the celebrity endorser.

Respondents' reactions to the company were measured by corporate image and attitude towards the company in the advertisement. Reactions to the advertisement were measured by attitude toward the advertisement, liking the advertisement, attitude towards the brand in the advertisement, and attitude towards the product in the advertisement. Refer to Table 1 for details on the determination of the constructs used. Behavioral intentions were measured by purchase intention, and positive word of mouth. Manova, one-way ANOVA, and General Linear Model – Univariate analysis was used to assess interactions between advertisements types (with or without Fauziah Latiff, the celebrity endorser) and the variables mentioned.

**Table 1: Sources of Key Measurement Scales**

Measure	Author	No. Of Items	Scale Range	No. Of Factors	Reliability	Validity	Scale Type
Corporate Image	(Annan, 1999)	22	1 - 5	6	0.70 to 0.88	Yes**	B <sup>++</sup>
	(Spencer, 1999)	14	1 - 5	3	0.87	Yes**	L
Attitude Toward The Company	(Peterson, Wilson, and Brown, 1992)	3	1 - 5	-	0.91	No	B
	(Simard, Taylor, and Giles, 1976)	2	-	-	-	-	-
Attitude Toward Advertisement	(Henthorne, LaTour, and Natarajan, 1993)	6	1 - 4	-	0.77	No	B
Like The Advertisement	(Walker and Dubitsky, 1994)	1	1 - 5	-	-	No	L
Attitude Towards Brand	(Gardner, 1985) (Mitchell and Olson, 1981)	4	1 - 7	-	0.93	No	B
Attitude Towards Product	(Maheswaran and Sternthal, 1990)	7	1 - 7	1	0.81	Yes**	B
Purchase Intention	(Maheswaran and Sternthal, 1990)	1	1 - 7	-	-	No	L
Word Of Mouth	(Becker and Kaldenberg, 2000)	1	1 - 5	-	-	No	L

\*\* = Exploratory Factor Analysis, + = Likert Scale, ++ = Bi-polar Scale

### Findings

A depiction of the respondents profile is presented in Table 2. The means for the variables studied are depicted in Table 3 and Table 4.

**Table 2: Respondent Profile**

Variables		Overall		Male		Female	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Gender	Male	148	37.3	148	100.0	-	-
	Female	249	62.7	-	-	249	100
Age Scale	Below 21	172	43.3	64	43.2	108	43.4
	22	109	27.5	29	19.6	80	32.1
	23 above	116	29.2	55	37.2	61	24.5
Education	Secondary	318	80.1	124	83.8	194	77.9
	Diploma	71	17.9	23	15.5	48	19.2
	Degree	8	2	1	0.7	7	2.9
Ethnicity	Malay	136	34.3	51	34.5	85	34.1
	Chinese	138	34.8	50	33.8	88	35.3
	Indian	28	7.1	10	6.8	18	7.2
	Bumiputera Sabah & Sarawak	95	23.9	37	25.0	58	23.3

**Table 3: Means for Variables Studied by Overall, Ads with Celebrity and Ads without Celebrity – Male respondents**

Variables	Ads with Celebrity		Ads with no Celebrity	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
Corporate Image	4.68	0.78	4.70	0.82
Attitude towards the Company	4.64	0.75	4.71	0.83
Attitude towards the Advertisement	4.54	0.70	4.66	0.83
Like the advertisement	4.49	1.37	4.38	1.36
Attitude towards the Brand	4.88	1.04	4.94	1.04
Attitude towards the Product	4.86	1.02	4.95	0.89
Purchase intention	4.22	1.28	4.51	1.39
Word of mouth	4.25	1.17	4.48	1.16

**Table 4: Means for Variables Studied by Overall, Ads with Celebrity and Ads without Celebrity – Female respondents**

Variables	Ads with Celebrity		Ads with no Celebrity	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
Corporate Image	4.84	0.83	4.74	0.88
Attitude towards the Company*	4.80	0.72	4.59	0.78
Attitude towards the Advertisement	4.69	0.89	4.55	0.91
Like the advertisement	4.56	1.38	4.27	1.36
Attitude towards the Brand	4.99	1.10	4.90	1.14

Attitude towards the Product	5.13	1.09	5.00	1.04
Purchase intention	4.25	1.37	4.38	1.52
Word of mouth	4.41	1.35	4.20	1.28

\*Significant

MANOVA main effects for advertisement type (Pillai = 0.017,  $F = 0.854$ ,  $p < 0.556$ ), gender (Pillai = 0.014,  $F = 0.708$ ,  $p < 0.684$ ), and interaction effects of advertisement type \* gender (Pillai = 0.018,  $F = 0.866$ ,  $p < 0.545$ ), were found to be not significant. This demonstrates that there was no significant difference in respondents' views to the variables tested against an advertisement with a celebrity and one without. A one-way ANOVA was carried out on each genders response towards the two types of advertisements used. Table 5 depicts the results.

**Table 5: One-way ANOVA for each Gender by Advertisement Type**

Variables	Male		Female	
	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
Corporate Image	.013	.909	.722	.396
Attitude towards the Company	.295	.588	4.842	.029*
Attitude towards the Advertisement	.921	.339	1.379	.241
Like the advertisement	.253	.616	2.771	.097
Attitude towards the Brand	.094	.759	.411	.522
Attitude towards the Product	.361	.549	.857	.355
Purchase intention	1.717	.192	.506	.478
Word of mouth	1.491	.224	1.558	.213

\*significant

The GLM-Univariate analysis is depicted in Table 6. There was no interaction at the single variable level although there are two situations where the interaction is significant at a 10% level. Assumptions about normality and equality of variance were checked for all the variables and a visual examination of the histogram, Q-Q plots and descriptive statistics indicates that the assumptions are verified.

**Table 6: GLM Univariate Analysis**

Variables	Source	F	Sig
Corporate Image	Advertisement type	.197	.657
	Gender	1.357	.245
	Advertisement type * Gender	.381	.538
Attitude towards the Company	Advertisement type	.755	.385
	Gender	.054	.817
	<b>Advertisement type * Gender</b>	<b>3.096</b>	<b>.079</b>
Attitude towards the Advertisement	Advertisement type	.004	.947
	Gender	.069	.792
	Advertisement type * Gender	2.077	.150
Like the advertisement	Advertisement type	2.000	.158
	Gender	.017	.896
	Advertisement type * Gender	.385	.535
Attitude towards the Brand	Advertisement type	.029	.865
	Gender	.101	.751
	Advertisement type * Gender	.402	.527
Attitude towards the Product	Advertisement type	.021	.885
	Gender	2.266	.133
	Advertisement type * Gender	1.060	.304



Purchase intention	Advertisement type	2.058	.152
	Gender	.103	.749
	Advertisement type * Gender	.295	.587
Word of mouth	Advertisement type	.010	.919
	Gender	.219	.640
	<i>Advertisement type * Gender</i>	<b>2.850</b>	<b>.092</b>

## Discussion

The initial analysis using Means was based on attitude towards the company and its image, attitudinal and behavioral responses. Behavioral responses were consistently lowest, followed by attitude towards the company and its image and the highest was attitudinal (brand) (Refer Table 3 and Table 4). The findings suggest that consumer's intention to buy a product may not necessarily stem from the advertisement but may be caused by other mediating factors, such as need, price and availability.

Celebrity endorsements in this study did not result in more favorable advertisement ratings and product evaluations as suggested by other earlier studies (Cooper, 1984; Dean and Biswas, 2001). Nevertheless, what was surprising was that there was no significant difference in the response of the predetermined, selected and known segment towards a pretested and accepted celebrity endorser. For male respondents, there was no difference in reaction towards an advertisement with or without the celebrity. This was expected, as they were not the target of the product (cosmetic). What was more interesting was that nearly the same results occurred for female respondents (the targeted group). The only significant difference occurred for the variable attitude towards the company, where the advertisement with a celebrity scored significantly higher. This suggests that even though the celebrity did not add weight on other behavioral or attitudinal variables, it created a strong positive attitude towards the company. The company was seen in a better light and this may be more important in the long run than immediate sales.

Previous studies have nearly all found differences and significant differences in favor of celebrity advertisers (Atkins and Block, 1983; Friedman *et al.*, 1977). In this study, there was no significant difference in company, attitudinal and behavioral measures responses. This may be due perhaps to the methodology used where respondents only saw one type of advertisement and responded to it. There was no possibility of bias or comparison between the different types of advertisements. In essence, respondents evaluated each advertisement on its own merits and the authors found that these merits produced similar results.

The authors found no evidence that celebrity endorsement program, which normally cost millions of dollars, would benefit the company image directly. The result indicates instead a higher and more positive attitude towards the company for the targeted group only (female respondents). In other words, targeted respondents will react positively to the company, but may be indifferent in terms of their attitude towards company image, company, products and brand, whether a celebrity was used in an advertisement or not, if they were seeing only one type of advertisement.

Even though previous research shows favorable increase in respondents' perceived corporate image through high exposure to specific advertising campaign (Grass *et al.*, 1972), this study has proven otherwise. Communications of a corporate brand doesn't just happen when the company decides to launch a corporate advertising campaign; it occurs all the time and audience perceived the corporate image through the accumulation of all received messages (Ind, 1997). In this study, the extension or the transfer of the desired meaning from the celebrity to company might be viewed as insignificant or trivial. Even though prior research showed that a firm value tend to increase upon the announcement of celebrity contracts (Mathur and Mathur, 1996), respondents might not be able to see the direct linkage between the endorser and the company image. They may be more favorable towards the company, but not necessarily translate to a better company image. This may be due to the fact that the image of a company tends to be viewed holistically, which means respondents tend to view all aspects of the business and not in isolation of just one advertisement.

The image transference in this case did not occur for male respondents. For female respondents, the findings suggest a minor transference. The celebrity (Fauziah Latiff) may have not held the appropriate meaning (McCracken, 1989) or the consumer may have failed to recognize the essential similarity

between the message, product, and celebrity (Tom *et al.*, 1992). This highlights the problems of using celebrities as endorsers.

## **Conclusions**

This paper explores the issue of company image by assessing the reactions of respondents to advertising utilizing a celebrity endorser against one that does not. The findings show no significant difference for all variables between advertisements that have a celebrity endorser and those that don't, except for attitude towards the company for female respondents. There were weak overall interaction effects for the variables attitude towards the company and word of mouth. Behavioral responses were consistently lowest. Highest was attitudinal variables followed by attitude towards the company.

## **Limitations**

The sampling that was carried out was based on convenience sampling and limited to Sabah and Sarawak and to undergraduate students of two government universities. This may limit the generalizability of the findings. Nevertheless, it provides a sense of direction for future research. It is also acceptable as the students are in the same age cohort, and the segmented target of the advertisement (Basil, 1996; Cunningham *et al.*, 1974). A real life advertisement was used in the study, and as such problems with its own design and acceptance by respondents may have biased the findings.

## **Future Research**

There is a lack of replication research in marketing. Past study found that replication research is generally endorsed in the sciences, but not so in the advertising/consumer behavior/marketing literature (Madden *et al.*, 1995). This inhibits further understanding of issues highlighted and investigated yet also calls for further replication of this study. The context may be different but replications should be carried out to test if a larger sample or different artiste/celebrity endorser will also create the same results. Future studies could replicate this study in a different format, allowing for direct comparison between celebrity-endorsed advertisements and those without. This can be compared with the current study to see if there is an effect of placement bias.

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## Appendix 1

### Advertisement Used in the Questionnaire



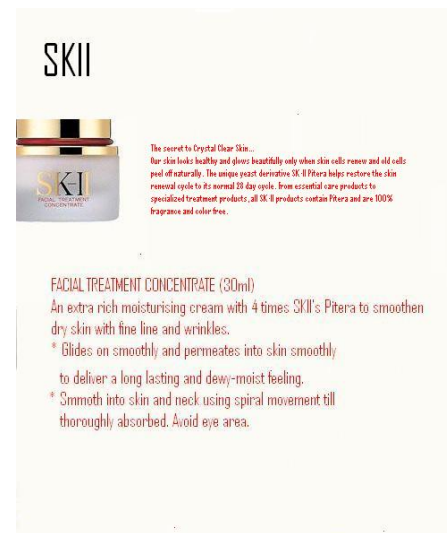
**SK-II**

**SK-II FACIAL TREATMENT CONCENTRATE**

**FACIAL TREATMENT CONCENTRATE (30ml)**  
An extra rich moisturising cream with 4 times SK-II's Pitera to smoothen dry skin with fine line and wrinkles.

- \* Glides on smoothly and permeates into skin smoothly to deliver a long lasting and dewy-moist feeling.
- \* Smooth into skin and neck using spiral movement till thoroughly absorbed. Avoid eye area.

The secret to Crystal Clear Skin... Our skin looks healthy and glows beautifully only when skin cells renew and old cells peel off naturally. The unique yeast derivative, SK-II Pitera helps restore the skin renewal cycle to its normal 28 day cycle. From essential care products to specialized treatment products, all SK-II products contain Pitera and are 100% fragrance and color-free.



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