

## **Perceptions of Advertising and Celebrity Endorsement in Malaysia**

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The purpose of this paper is to examine the overall perceptions of Malays, Chinese, and Indian consumers towards advertising by celebrities, and the influence of celebrity advertising towards customer purchasing behavior. The results showed that the Malays and Chinese were most familiar with certain celebrities than others. There were also significant differences between the Malays, Chinese, and Indian consumers on their attitudes towards advertising by celebrities, consumers' perceptions of product endorsement by celebrities, the celebrity's credibility, and brand selection. Overall, the respondents agreed that advertising by celebrities influenced them in making decisions to purchase a product. The implications of the research are discussed.

*Keywords:* Advertising Attitudes, Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Selection, Malaysia

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### **1. Introduction**

Advertisers often select endorsers as a promotional strategy to communicate the attributes of their product or brand. About a decade ago, one in three television commercials used celebrities' endorsements (Business Week, 1978), and today this advertising approach appeared to be on the increase across all media types (Sherman, 1985 and Levin, 1988). Friedman et al. (1977) found that celebrities are featured in 15 percent of the prime time television commercials. In the United States, it was reported that about 20% of all television commercials feature a famous person, and about 10% of the dollars spent on television advertising are used in celebrity endorsement advertisements (Advertising Age, 1987; Sherman, 1985). Thus, celebrity endorsement has become a prevalent form of advertising in United States (Agrawal and Kamakura, 1995) and elsewhere.

In Malaysia, celebrities have been widely used in advertising. For example, Erra Fazira endorses for Lux, Sarimah with Rejoice, Chef Wan with

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Vesawit and Siti Nurhaliza with Pepsi. This is to portray the brand image through celebrity endorser, and associate the celebrity with a particular brand so as to increase the level of credibility and belief among the consumers. When consumers could associate a product with an endorser, they could easily recall the brand and consequently influence them to purchase the product (Friedman and Friedman, 1979; Kamins, 1989). As such consumers must be familiar with the endorser.

In some cases, the celebrity or spokesperson endorsed more than one particular brand. For instance, Ziana Zain, the singer, was the ambassador for Omega watch, Golden Channel Jewelry and Nutribeaute, the latest nutritional supplement for youthful skin from Total Image. Wan Ismail or Chef Wan, Malaysian's favorite chef also endorsed Marina (sardines) and Vesawit (cooking oil). Chef Wan is also known for his talent in cooking and acting. Furthermore, Norman Hakim (actor and advertisement model) also endorsed more than one particular brand such as Nescafe (coffee), Hong Leong Finance (bank) and Windfield (cigarette).

Malaysian celebrities are not only known in the country, but also at the international level. For example, Ziana Zain has teamed up with supermodels such as Cindy Crawford and Elle Macpherson, Pierce Brosnan (actor), Michael Schumacher (Formula One, motoracing champion) and Martina Hingis (tennis star and a spokesperson for Omega).

Although the trend in celebrity advertising is gaining momentum in Malaysia, there are limited information on how Malaysian consumers perceive the advertising of branded products by celebrities, particularly among the Malays, Chinese, and Indians ethnic groups. In other words, the how do the Malays, Chinese and Indians perceive advertisement by celebrities? Are there differences in their perceptions towards product endorsement by celebrities? Are the Malays, Chinese and Indians able to associate or relate the advertised products with the celebrities? And, what are their attitudes towards advertisement by celebrities? These questions are particularly important as there were no prior studies or information related to these issues. Further, in a cross-cultural context like Malaysia, the advertisement by celebrities whose physical characteristics appear to be related to one ethnic group could affect effectiveness of celebrity advertising and product endorsement. It may also have implication on the economic worth of celebrity endorser (Agrawal and Kamakura, 1995), and multiple celebrity endorsers in advertising (Hsu and McDonald, 2002).

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to evaluate the overall perceptions of Malays, Chinese and Indians consumers towards advertising

of branded products by celebrities. This study would also examine consumers' perceptions of product endorsement by celebrities, and the influence of celebrity advertising towards consumers purchasing behavior.

The findings of this research have potential implications on the appropriate selection of celebrities for advertisement in a cross-cultural setting like Malaysia. This research can also provide implications on multicultural marketing/ advertising strategy in a multicultural country like Malaysia. This research could also enhance the generalizability of the impact of advertising by celebrities in a developing country.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Celebrity Advertising*

Kamins (1989) defined a celebrity as an individual who is known to the public for his/her achievements in areas other than that of the product class endorsed. As such, celebrities may include a typical consumer, a product class expert, or a company president. A typical consumer endorser is an ordinary person who is expected to have no special knowledge of the product class endorsed except that they are acquired by the normal use of the product. A product class expert is an individual or group possessing superior knowledge as a result of experience, study or training (Friedman and Friedman, 1979). Kamins found that believability of the spokesperson is directly linked to advertisement effectiveness and purchase intention.

A celebrity is also chosen based on his/her credibility. Highly credible endorsers are expected to produce more positive attitude changes towards the position advocated and to induce more behavioral changes than less credible sources. According to Ohanian (1990), someone who is well known, attractive, trustworthy, an expert or even a combination of some or all of these traits would be highly credible.

Dholakia and Sternthal (1977) found that messages involving highly credible sources are more effective when consumers had no prior knowledge or experience on which to rely. Conversely, low credibility sources are more effective when consumers relied on their own experiences. Hovland and Weiss (1951) found that highly credible endorsers such as actors and sports figures are more persuasive than a low credibility endorser when involvement is low, but found no systematically consistent credibility effect when involvement is high. They reported that a highly credible endorser is more persuasive than a less credible communicator. This suggests the importance of a credible endorser in advertising.

Rubin et al. (1982) examined the performance of a company president versus an unknown professional spokesperson in creating positive attitudes toward the advertisement. They found that a president's judgments of trustworthiness improved his rating for an advertisement. Friedman and Friedman (1979) also suggested that the celebrity would be more effective for products with high psychological social risk, involving elements such as good taste, self-image and opinions of others. In their study, the expert endorser is seen as most appropriate for products associated with high financial, performance or physical risk while the typical consumer is considered to be the best source for low risk products.

When a celebrity endorses a product successfully, consumers will evaluate the endorsement positively, feeling it is credible, believable and appealing (Ohanian, 1990; 1991). Consequently, people would tend to like the advertisement, brand name, enhanced advertisement recall, increase product liking and other positive effects may occur (Brown and Stayman, 1992). Cronley et al. (1999) examined celebrity advertising in terms of the correspondence bias. Correspondence bias is the tendency to assume that a person's behavior is a true reflection of their beliefs or opinions, and their underlying dispositions when in fact, their behavior could be explained entirely by situational factors (Jones, 1979; 1986; Gilbert and Malone, 1995). Their study showed that correspondence bias occurred when consumers evaluate celebrity endorsed advertisements. This means that celebrity advertising is an effective advertising tool. Further, the study found that people have positive attitudes and preferences for a product to the celebrity endorser. One explanation for is that consumers assume the celebrity endorser likes the brand and the product (Cronley et al, 1999).

Further, consumers who are exposed to the celebrity endorsement would expect the product to sell at a higher price compared to the advertisements without celebrities (Friedman and Friedman, 1979). This is due to the celebrity's prestige, which might have the '*spill-over*' effect for the product. The celebrity will also be more effective in sustaining recall of the advertisement and the brand name of the product (Till, 1998; Goldsmith et al, 2000).

## *2.2 Brand and Celebrity Congruence*

Brand image is defined as "perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in memory" (Keller, 1993). Keller suggests that the favorability, uniqueness and strength of the associations are critical to a brand's success. Brand associations are developed from a variety of sources including product use, informational sources (such as advertising, packaging

and word-of mouth) and association with other entities. Keller also suggested that when a brand becomes associated with an event, some of the associations linked with the event (such as youthfulness, relaxing, enjoyable, disappointing, sophisticated, elite, etc.) might become linked in memory with the brand.

Heaton (1967) conducted a study that used multiple criteria for the selection of a new corporate name for a medium-sized consumer and industrial goods manufacturer. Based on in-depth interviews with 111 adults, he concluded that a good corporate name should be: (1) distinctive, (2) memorable, (3) able to communicate specific favorable ideas, (4) able to suggest general types of products a company makes and (5) consistent with a company's product lines and brand names.

Although marketers can invoke a variety of tools to develop and maintain appropriate associations, celebrity endorsers represent one way in which meanings can be transferred to brands (McCracken, 1986; 1989). As such, the role of celebrity endorsers can be a powerful mechanism for managing brand image. Till (1998) showed that celebrity endorsement would be more effective when used consistently over time to increase the strength of the link between the celebrity and the endorsed brand. It was also suggested that when selecting a celebrity endorser, one should select those who have not been associated with another product or service. Assuring a fit or congruence between the celebrity endorser and the brand is essential towards successful and effective celebrity advertising. The perceived fit between the celebrity and product could be related to physical attractiveness, expertise or other relevant characteristics (Kahle and Homer, 1985; Hsu and McDonald, 2002; till and Busler, 1998). Previous studies have also showed that endorser – product congruity positively affects consumers' perceptions of spokesperson credibility, attitudes, recall, recognition, purchase intention, and willingness to pay higher prices (Kahle and Homer, 1985; Kamins and Gupta, 1994; Till and Busler, 1998)

Walker et al. (1992) showed that pairing products (in their study, VCR, bath towel and jeans) with very different celebrities (Madonna or Christie Brinkley) could affect the subjects' images of those products, which can be consistent with the image of the celebrity with which that product had been paired. For an example, the use of the likeable, though slightly outrageous, Andre Agassi, fits with and enhances the image of Canon's "*Rebel*" line of cameras.

To investigate possible interactions between product class and endorser type, Friedman and Friedman (1979), manipulated four spokesperson

variables and three product variables in an experiment involving women. They found significant endorser-type-product-type interaction. Expert endorsers can be more effective for household durable products such as vacuum cleaners; whereas celebrities are more effective for luxury products such as costume jewelry. Celebrities and experts had no particular effect in advertisements for consumer-packaged goods such as cookies.

Atkin and Block (1983) studied the effects of three celebrity and three non-celebrity spokespersons on consumer's perception towards the advertisements, the character and the product image for three alcoholic beverages. The celebrity treatments created more positive effects among younger consumers. Advertisement featuring a celebrity is rated more positively than the almost identical versions with a non-celebrity. The image of the product tends to be more favorable when a famous endorsee is shown. The respondents are likely to rate the alcohol brand as enjoyable and pleasant. Till (1998) also found that celebrity endorsers could be used effectively to reinforce and create an image for a product or service. For example, Pepsi had used a variety of endorsers such as Michael J. Fox, Madonna, Michael Jackson and others to reinforce their 'youth' image.

Celebrities can assist in the recognition of brand names, create positive feelings towards the brand and create a distinct personality for the endorsed brand (McCraken, 1989). Celebrity endorsement is also believed to generate a greater likelihood of customers' choosing the endorsed brand (Kahle and Homer, 1985; Ohanian, 1990; Cronley et al. 1999).

The use of celebrity endorsements in an advertising strategy could enhance the marginal value of the advertisement expenditures and create brand equity (Keller, 1993). He added that the particular product – endorser combinations resulted in better overall attitude toward the product, greater intent to purchase the advertised product and more credibility for the endorser. Goldsmith et al (2000) found that the endorser credibility had the strongest impact on attitude towards the advertisement, while corporate credibility had the least impact on the attitude towards the brand.

Urde (1994) found that the increased attention and brand liking that of a likeable spokesperson provides impact on the purchase behavior and brand loyalty. Some had purchased a product because a character focused their attention on the advertisement, which they then found interesting. It was also noted that a spokesperson's influence could be affected by other factors like price, similarity of competing brands and availability of other information. In general, it was felt that the celebrity influenced the consumers when the product is inexpensive, low involving and when few differences are

perceived between brands.

From these studies, it was apparent that celebrity endorsement of a product or service has an impact on the advertisement. It may be related to the fact that the consumers may be aware of the product, link the celebrity with the product, have positive attitudes toward the advertisement, perceived credibility, brand recall, tendency to purchase, and positive image of the brand.

### **3. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses**

There are at least three conceptual perspectives that offer a description on how celebrity advertising could affect the evaluation of the consumers' perception. The first perspective refers to the evaluation of stimuli as a result of assimilation and contrast effects (Sherif and Hovland, 1961). Assimilation and contrast effects describe the evaluation of stimuli as a comparison of the new stimuli to an existing knowledge base. This perspective suggested that consumers evaluate the information about the endorser, and if the information appears to fit with the consumer's prior perception of the product, then the information from the advertisement would be accepted or assimilated into the consumer's knowledge structure and positive evaluation of the endorsement would result. If the information does not appear to fit with the consumer's prior perception of the product, then the information would be considered to be too much of a contrast and would be rejected.

The second perspective is a variation on the assimilation and contrast effects called the match-up hypothesis (Kahle and Homer, 1985 and Kamins, 1990). The match-up hypothesis suggests that endorsers are more effective when there is a fit between the endorser and the endorsed product (Kamins, 1990). Advertising practitioners have also pointed out the importance of having a matched up between the personality and attributes of the spokesperson, and the theme of the campaign or the brand attributes so as to improve advertising effectiveness (Forkran, 1980; Marshall, 1987). When a celebrity's physical attractiveness is congruent with the advertised product (such as attractive celebrity is linked with the attractiveness of the related product), the match-up hypothesis would predict as a positive impact upon the product and advertisement evaluations (Kahle and Homer, 1985). However, if there were incongruence between the product and celebrity attractiveness, the evaluation would be unfavorable.

The third perspective is the schema congruity theory (Fiske, 1982). A schema congruity theory builds on the first two perspectives and offered insights beyond the match-up hypothesis by looking at how the process might

work. A schema is an organized structure of associations and expectations one has for a given domain. The structure of a schema organizes the consumer's evaluation of stimuli. For example, when a consumer evaluates a product, a comparison is made between the characteristics of the product and the characteristics of the schema with which the product is being associated. In the case of an endorsement, schema theory would suggest that the evaluation progress is a comparison between the schema for the product and the schema for the spokesperson. If the spokesperson is an athlete, then the athlete's sport should be a significant part of the spokesperson's schema. When the two schemas are completely matched, then the consumer evaluates the endorsement positively. When two schemas are completely mismatched, then, the consumer rejects the endorsement. When there is a moderate incongruent match up between the image of the sport of the athlete and the image of the product, schema congruity theory would suggest that the consumer should be stimulated to process more information about the product, and the athlete, searching for additional characteristics that will either match or not match. If the consumer concludes there is a match, then the additional processing would create strong positive feelings towards the endorsement and the product because of the interest value stimulated by the moderate incongruity. If the consumer concludes there is a mismatch then the additional processing that the consumer did will produce a strong negative feelings towards the endorsement and the product.

In order to assess the perceptions of the consumers towards advertising by celebrities, this study adopted the integrated framework of the match-up hypothesis and the schema congruity theory. This method is adopted as the study intends to assess the consumers' familiarity with the product and celebrity, and then uses the schema congruity to assess the ability of the consumers to relate each of the selected products with the celebrity endorser. By adopting both approaches, it would be possible to assess the attitudes of the consumers' towards advertising by celebrity, the celebrity's credibility, and brand selection. This approach is adopted as it involved consumers from different ethnic groups, particularly the Malays, Chinese and Indians, which due to their cultural orientations may have certain ways of viewing the advertisement and celebrities. As such the following hypotheses are advanced:

- H1: There are differences among the Malays, Chinese and Indians on consumers' familiarity towards advertising by celebrity
- H2: There are significant differences among Malays, Chinese and Indians on product endorsement by celebrities
- H3: There are significant differences among Malays, Chinese and



## Indians on attitudes towards advertising by celebrities

### **4. Methodology**

Based on previous studies (Kahle and Homer, 1985; Ohanian, 1990; 1991 Till, 1998), a structured questionnaire was developed. The respondents were asked to respond to the questions on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). A pretest of the questionnaire was conducted to determine whether the future respondents could respond to the questions, especially those related to the celebrity and product endorsement. The results of the pre-test suggest that there would not be any difficulty from the respondents to respond to the questionnaire. A total of 240 respondents participated in the survey conducted in the Universiti Putra Malaysia campus and the housing area in the UPM campus (Sri Serdang) vicinity. This area was selected as it has the multi-cultural community. A Convenience sampling method was used to select the respondents as it was less expensive.

Information on the celebrities were chosen based on advertisements running between 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. in TV1, TV2, TV3 and NTV7 as it was considered as prime time by the media. Only commercial advertisements were selected. A celebrity is selected if he/she falls into one of the three categories: singers/ actresses/actors; models; and personalities. It should be noted that TV1 is predominantly a Malay channel, while TV2 comprises of advertisements in Chinese, Indian and English languages. TV3 is only in Malay, while NTV7 has a mix selected of Malays, Chinese, and Indians.

Celebrities like Siti Nurhaliza, Ning Baizura and Imuda were categorized in the first category. Arianna Teoh, Kavita Kaur and Sarimah were in the second category. Sport celebrities like Alex Yong, Nicole David and Shazlin Zulkifli were known to the public for his/her achievements in areas other than that of the product class endorsed. For example, Shazlin Zulkifli represents the Malaysian bowling team.

The Cronbach alpha value for the 18 items on attitudes towards celebrity was 0.9202, suggesting a fair level of internal consistency in the responses.

In the sample, nearly 38% (n=90) of the respondents were Malays, 33% (n=80) were Chinese and 29% (n=70) were Indians.

## 5. Results and Discussion

### 5.1 Consumer's Familiarity Towards Advertising by Celebrity

Table 1 showed that 85.8% of the respondents were familiar with celebrities like Siti Nurhaliza, followed closely by Sheila Majid with 78.3%.

Table 1: Consumer's Familiarity Towards Advertising by Celebrity

Celebrity	Total Respondents (%)	Malays (%)	Chinese (%)	Indians (%)
Ning Baizura	61.5	66.7	35	60
Siti Nurhaliza	85.8	96.6	81.3	80
Zainal Abidin	60.8	78.8	45	55.7
Camelia	53.3	75.5	22.5	60
Sheila Majid	78.3	84.4	68.8	81.4
Erra Fazira	69.2	93.3	48.8	61.4
Fauziah latiff	64.6	86.6	47.5	55.7
Sarimah	42.1	68.8	15	38.6
Munna	26.3	52.2	6.3	15.7
Lina Teoh	68.8	65.5	75	65.7
Arianna Teoh	44.2	54.4	38.8	37.1
Jacqueline Lee	28.8	28.9	30	27.1
Kavita Kaur	47.9	56.7	26.3	61.4
Imuda	58.3	90	22.5	58.6
Wardina	35.8	66.7	5	31.4
Yusni Jaafar	44.2	78.8	11.3	37.1
Alex Yong	49.6	63.3	35	48.6
Nicole David	46.7	58.9	31.3	50
Shazlin Zulkifli	42.5	61.1	32.5	30

In terms of ethnic groups, 96.6% of the Malay respondents were familiar with Siti Nurhaliza and 93.3% were familiar with Erra Fazira. Malay respondents also placed Imuda and Fauziah Latiff in the third and fourth place in the familiarity rank. However, Jacqueline Lee was rated as least familiar among the Malays, followed by Munna, Arianna Teoh and Wardina. The Chinese respondents, however, were also familiar with Siti Nurhaliza (81%), and Lina Teoh (75%). Wardina, Yusni Jaafar and Munna were rated as least familiar among the Chinese respondents. Among the Indian respondents, Sheila Majid (81.4%) was rated as the most familiar celebrity, followed by Siti Nurhaliza (80%). About 66% of the Indian respondents were

familiar with Lina Teoh and 61.4% were familiar with Kavita Kaur and Erra Fazira.

With respect to the type of celebrities, the respondents were most familiar with celebrities that were categorized as actor/actress/singer. For example, more than 50% of the total respondents agreed that they were familiar with Siti Nurhaliza, Sheila Majid, Erra Fazira, Lina Teoh, Fauziah Latiff, Ning Baizura, Zainal Abidin, Imuda and Camelia. However, the models and personalities were found to be less familiar among the respondents. For example, personalities such as Alex Yong, Nicole David and Shazlin Zulkifli were found to be less familiar by the respondents. Celebrities like Kavita Kaur, Arianna Teoh, Sarimah and Jacqueline Lee scored less favorably among the respondents. This could be due to the fact that the celebrities were less well known.

From the above findings, it is clear that H1 is supported. This means that different ethnic groups were more familiar with certain celebrities than others. This could be due to the physical attractiveness, perceived expertise, and credibility of the celebrity. It was also apparent that the familiarity could be related to the fact that the celebrities were more known as singers (like Siti Nurhaliza and Sheila Majid) than actress (Erra Fazira and Lina Teoh) or models (Kavita Kaur and Jacqueline Lee).

### *5.2 Consumers' Perceptions of Product Endorsement by Celebrities*

Table 2 showed that there were significant differences between the Malays, Chinese, and Indians on the product endorsement by celebrities. The Malays perceived that Siti Nurhaliza was associated with Maybelline more than the Chinese or Indian consumers (significant at  $p < 0.05$ ). Most of the Chinese and Malay respondents were agreed with this association as Siti Nurhaliza has delicate and radiant skin, which suits her to endorse Maybelline.

In the case of Camelia and L'Oreal, the Malays have higher mean scores (more agreement) than the Chinese and Indians (significant at  $p < 0.01$ ). The Chinese respondents scored lower (3.29) as many of the Chinese respondents were less familiar with Camelia. There were also significant differences among the Malays, Chinese and Indians in relation to Yusni Jaafar with Minyak Cap Buruh (significant at  $p < 0.01$ ). It seemed that the Malays and Indians were more familiar than the Chinese on this celebrity and product advertised. Imuda as the spokesperson for Taj Mahal Rice and Jacqueline Lee as the spokesperson for Johnson ph 5.5 were the least popular.

Table 2: Consumers Perceptions of Product Endorsement by Celebrities

Statement	Malays	Chinese	Indians	F-value
Siti Nurhaliza with Maybelline	4.32	4.11	3.76	6.284*
Camelia with Loreal	4.21	3.29	3.56	27.387**
Sheila Majid with Lux	3.70	3.95	3.99	2.125
Yusni Jaafar with Minyak Cap Buruh	4.04	3.11	3.41	23.012**
Imuda with Taj Mahal	3.37	2.90	2.90	5.408
Sarimah with Rejoice	2.91	3.06	2.94	0.581
Lina Teoh with Maybelline	3.64	3.84	3.51	1.951
Jacqueline Lee with Johnson ph 5.5	3.20	3.48	3.14	2.795
Alex Yong with Brycream	3.89	3.49	3.47	5.355
Shazlin Zulkifli with Pizza Hut	2.86	2.95	2.93	0.189

Scale : 1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=Indifferent, 4=Agree,  
5=Strongly agree

\*Significant @  $p \leq 0.05$

\*\* Significant @  $p \leq 0.01$

The results showed that H2 is partially supported. This means that different ethnic groups were more aware of the association between celebrity and products. It was also clear that certain celebrities were associated more with certain products by a particular ethnic group than by other ethnic groups. This could be due to the familiarity of the ethnic groups towards celebrities, and therefore, suggests the congruence or fit between the celebrity and product endorsed. The less familiar the ethnic groups were towards each of the celebrity, the lesser the fit between the endorsed product and the celebrity.

### 5.3 Consumers' Attitude Towards Advertising by Celebrity

The results showed that advertising by celebrities' improved company and product's image. However, this type of advertising did not help in selecting the brand. There were significant differences among the Malays, Chinese and Indian respondents on their attitudes towards advertising by celebrity. The Malays have more favorable attitudes towards advertising than the Indians or Chinese on the following statements: enjoy seeing celebrity advertisements, improve the company's image, improve product image, and enhance the value (significant at  $p < 0.01$ ). (See Table 3.) The Indians were more favorable than the Chinese on the following statements: enjoy seeing the celebrity advertisement, and improve the company's image. However, the Chinese were more favorable than the Indians on the following statements: improve product's image, and enhance the value.

Table 3: Consumer's Attitude towards Celebrity Advertisement by Ethnic Groups

Statement	Malays	Chinese	Indians	F-value
<u>General Attitudes</u>				
Enjoy seeing celebrity ads	3.80	3.25	3.40	6.865*
Improve the company's image	4.11	3.55	3.64	9.669*
Improve product's image	4.01	3.68	3.61	5.208*
Increase consumer's expectation	3.77	3.60	3.53	1.275
Enhance the value	3.82	3.45	3.36	5.582*
Improve brand image	3.89	3.79	3.69	1.117
<u>Credibility</u>				
Competent	3.52	3.16	2.94	6.521*
Trustworthy	3.46	3.10	2.84	6.598*
Meaningful messages	3.51	3.13	2.89	6.747*
Reliable	3.50	2.99	2.90	7.578*
<u>Selecting a brand</u>				
Influence in making decision for purchasing a product	3.46	2.94	2.54	11.750*
Usage	2.84	2.65	2.29	5.613*
Intelligent choices	2.88	2.69	2.16	8.459*
Tendency to buy	2.89	2.70	2.21	7.967*
Make me confident	2.93	2.89	2.37	5.912*
<u>Advertising by celebrity</u>				
Well-known	3.89	3.88	3.74	0.880
Expensive	3.87	3.71	3.67	1.017
Recall of the brand	3.80	3.86	3.67	0.860

Scale: 1=Strongly disagree 2=Disagree, 3=Indifferent, 4=Agree  
5=Strongly agree

\* Significant @  $p \leq 0.01$

#### 5.4 Consumers' Attitude Towards Celebrity's Credibility

With regards to the consumers' attitudes towards celebrity's credibility, 72.2% of the Malay respondents felt that the celebrities were competent, meaningful, and trustworthy in promoting the endorsed brand. 70% agreed that the celebrity provided trustworthy message on the endorsed brand. For

the Chinese, 56% agreed that the celebrities were competent. 55% agreed that the celebrities were trustworthy, and meaningful in promoting the endorse brand. 48.8% agreed that the celebrity was reliable. For the Indians, 44.3% agreed that the celebrity was competent, but 42.9% agreed that the celebrity was trustworthy, meaningful, and reliable. The results also suggest that the Indians had lower scores than the Malays or Chinese (significant at  $p < 0.01$ ).

### *5.5 Consumers' Attitudes Towards Brand Selection*

The results showed there were significant differences among the Malays, Chinese, and Indians on the importance of celebrity advertisement for selecting brands: influence in making decision for purchasing a product, usage, intelligent choices, tendency to buy, and make me confident (significant at  $p < 0.01$ ). More specifically, 67.8% of the Malay respondents agreed that advertising influenced them. However, only 43.3 percent of the Malay respondents indicated that advertising by celebrity would help them in making more intelligent choices among different brands. More than half of the Malay respondents showed disagreement on this statement. The results indicated that, even though celebrity advertisement influenced Malay respondents in making decision for selecting a brand, consumers prefer to use their previous knowledge and experiences when making more intelligent choices among different brands.

In contrast, 50 percent of the Chinese respondents and 64.3 percent of the Indian respondents disagreed that the advertising by celebrity influenced them in making decision for purchasing or selecting a product and 60 percent of the Chinese respondents and 75.7 percent of the Indian respondents disagreed that the advertising by celebrity would help them to make more intelligent choices among different brands.

54.4 percent of the Malay respondents said that they would not use a brand or buy a brand that was endorsed by a celebrity. 53.3 percent of the Malay respondents also disagreed that using a brand that was endorsed by a celebrity would make them confident. Similarly, Chinese and Indian respondents have comparable response for each of the statements.

The above results showed that H3 is partially supported. There were significant differences in 13 out of the 18-attitudinal statements towards advertising by celebrities. There were no significant differences on items related to consumers' expectations, brand image, brand recall, expensive and well-known products.

## **6. Conclusion**

From the result of this study it was found out that Siti Nurhaliza was the most popular endorser followed by Sheila Majid and Erra Fazira. Most of the popular product endorsers were female artists. It was also found that celebrities' endorsement enhanced the company as well as product's image. The Malaysian consumers also felt that advertising by celebrity provides some valuable information on the endorsed brand. This would help consumers in selecting a product with various brands. As such, it is important to associate a product with the right endorser in order to enhance the positive image of the product and brand.

It was also clear that the Malay respondents were able to identify the celebrity advertisements better than the rest of the race groups. The results also suggest that the Malays tend to recall the specific products better than any other race groups. This is not unusual as the younger consumers are more receptive to reference group influence. As such marketers should use this opportunity to attract the younger generations to try out their advertised product.

The present research also suggests the importance in considering the appropriate match and congruity between celebrity spokesperson and product type. It was clear that certain celebrity did not fit with certain products like Shazlin Zulkifli with Pizza Hut. Thus, the effectiveness of the advertisement could be limited.

Thus, more careful consideration must be made in selecting the right endorser for the right brand. The fit between the endorser and the product that is being endorsed must be made prior to making the final advertisement. If there is a fit between the brand and the endorser, brand recall and recognition could be enhanced. It is also necessary to find the association between the product and the endorser, in order to influence the consumers to purchase the endorsed brand. If the consumers did not find any association between the celebrity and the product, they may not like the advertisement and the effectiveness of the advertisement is constrained.

When considering the issue of fit, one must also consider the fit the brand celebrity target audience fit. This is important as the association between the advertiser and the celebrity is consistent with the target audience perceptions. Different groups of people may have different associations for a particular celebrity. It is, therefore, necessary to test the possible use of any celebrity with the brand's target group to ensure that the image/associations that the celebrity has in the minds of the target audience are meaningful and relevant. This is particularly important in a cross-cultural context where the

Malays, Chinese and Indians have different value orientations and perspectives.

Overall, this study showed that using a well-known celebrity as an endorser could help to improve the subjects' rating of the commercial. Therefore, it is advisable for companies to consider using a well-known celebrity as an endorser rather than nameless spokesperson. However, the advertising practitioner should also recognize that the use of a well-known personality, who can create initial interest and attention for an advertisement, does not necessarily result in attitude changes towards the product.

In terms of celebrities' credibility, there were significant differences among the ethnic groups. This means that the advertising strategies must be made carefully to determine the potential effectiveness of the advertisement. Therefore, selecting the appropriate celebrity is important to enhance the credibility of the advertisement.

With regard to generalizability, the finding of this study was limited to the celebrities and product endorsements tested in this research. Future research should examine the impact of consumer's involvement and confidence in the product. For example, how does source credibility influence purchase intentions with high involvement products, as opposed to low involvement products? Should celebrities and other credible sources be used with high involvement or low involvement products? And how does the level of consumer's confidence and knowledge about the product mediate the impact of source credibility on intentions to purchase the product?

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