JEBD
Journal of Entrepreneurial and Business Diversity
PT. Keberlanjutan Strategis Indonesia
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Indexed by : sinta 4 Crossref GARUDA Google scholar

THE EFFECT OF CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT, BRAND IMAGE, AND TESTIMONIALS ON PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARD SCARLETT WHITENING PRODUCTS IN PEKANBARU

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Article Info:

Article History:
Received: 2026-06-16
Revised: 2026-07-06
Accepted: 2026-08-13

Keyword:
Celebrity endorsement; brand image; testimonials; purchase intention

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Paper Type:
Research Paper

Abstract:

Purpose:
This study aims to analyze the effects of celebrity endorsement, brand image, and testimonials on purchase intention toward Scarlett Whitening products in Pekanbaru.

Methodology:
This study employed a quantitative approach involving 120 respondents selected through non-probability sampling. The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression with SPSS.

Findings:
The results indicate that celebrity endorsement, brand image, and testimonials each have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention toward Scarlett Whitening products in Pekanbaru.

Implication:
The findings may serve as a reference for the company in evaluating and improving its marketing strategies and may also inform future research.

INTRODUCTION

Rapid technological advancement has intensified human needs and preferences, while the resources available to satisfy them remain limited. Modern life is increasingly dependent on technology, which has stimulated innovation across many sectors, including food and beverages, healthcare, beauty, and personal care. At the same time, rapid business development has intensified competition, requiring companies to continuously refine their marketing strategies in order to remain competitive.

Consumers generally seek an attractive and well-groomed appearance, which has increased the importance of skincare and body-care products. Skin and facial health are major concerns because they are highly visible aspects of appearance. Consequently, skincare and body-care products are widely used to support personal care and enhance self-confidence.

Scarlett Whitening is a local brand established in 2017 by Indonesian public figure Felicya Angelista. Its products are manufactured by PT Motto Beringin Abadi in Bogor, Indonesia, and distributed by PT Opto Lumbung Sejahtera. One of Scarlett Whitening's well-known products is its body lotion, which is marketed as helping to brighten, moisturize, and regenerate the skin.

Social media provides an effective platform for celebrity endorsement in promoting Scarlett Whitening products. According to Darmawan and Iriani (2021), celebrity endorsement involves the use of an individual's popularity and credibility to influence consumers. Scarlett Whitening has collaborated with South Korean actor Song Joong Ki as a brand endorser. His presence as the face of the brand may increase its attractiveness and exposure, thereby encouraging consumers' purchase intention.

According to Ferdinand (2016), purchase intention reflects an interest in purchasing that develops into a persistent internal motivation and may ultimately lead to purchasing behavior when consumers seek to satisfy their needs. Rahima (2018) similarly describes purchase intention as an important driver of consumer decision-making. Accordingly, this study examines the factors that influence consumers' purchase intention toward Scarlett Whitening products in Pekanbaru.

Table 1. Pre-Survey Results on Purchase Intention toward Scarlett Whitening Products

Number	Statement	Answer

		Agree	Disagree
1	I am interested in trying Scarlett Whitening products in the near future.	62.9%	37.1%
2	I am willing to buy Scarlett Whitening products if they are available at an affordable price.	71.4%	28.6%
3	If an actor or celebrity recommends a Scarlett Whitening product, I would consider buying it.	80.0%	20.0%
4	I once considered buying a Scarlett Whitening product after seeing its promotions or advertisements.	57.1%	42.9%

Source: Processed Data, 2024

Table 1 presents the pre-survey results regarding consumers' purchase intention toward Scarlett Whitening products. Of the 35 respondents, 62.9% expressed an intention to try the products, 71.4% were willing to purchase them at an affordable price, and 80.0% would consider purchasing them if recommended by an actor or celebrity. In addition, 57.1% had considered making a purchase after seeing a promotion or advertisement. Overall, the results indicate relatively strong purchase intention, particularly in response to celebrity recommendations.

Celebrity endorsement can play an important role in strengthening consumers' purchase intention toward Scarlett Whitening products by fostering emotional connections and reinforcing positive brand perceptions. According to Dwivedi, Johnson, and McDonald (2015), effective endorsements can strengthen self-brand connections, trust, and brand awareness, thereby influencing purchase decisions. McCracken (2019) describes celebrity endorsers as well-known individuals with broad influence who are often selected on the basis of their favorable image and attractiveness.

Brand image refers to the overall impression of a brand formed in consumers' minds through their perceptions, experiences, and associations. According to Keller et al. (2016), brand image is shaped by strong and relevant brand associations that reflect consumers' cognitive and emotional connections with a brand. A positive brand image can create added value, differentiate a brand from its competitors, and encourage purchase intention (Aaker, 2016). Strong brand awareness, favorable quality perceptions, and relevant associations can also strengthen consumer trust and influence purchasing decisions.

Testimonials also contribute to consumer trust and brand credibility by providing social proof of product quality. According to Khamitov et al. (2021), testimonials from actual users may be particularly persuasive because consumers tend to perceive them as authentic and relatively objective.

Previous Research

Previous studies indicate that celebrity attractiveness, trustworthiness, and familiarity can positively influence consumer purchase intention (Frimpong et al., 2019; Mubarok, 2016). However, Vidyanata and Hadiwidjojo (2018) found that celebrity endorsement does not always produce a significant effect. Other factors, including perceived quality, brand loyalty, and negative publicity surrounding an endorser, may also influence purchasing decisions. These mixed findings provide a basis for examining the relationship between celebrity endorsement, brand image, and purchase intention in the context of Scarlett Whitening products.

Previous studies have also reported mixed findings regarding brand image. Kuswibowo (2021) found that brand image had a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, whereas Cece (2015) reported no significant effect on purchase intention toward Macbeth shoes at Sogo Galaxy Mall Surabaya, which was attributed to relatively low consumer awareness of the brand. These differences suggest that the effect of brand image on purchase intention may depend on contextual factors such as brand exposure and market awareness.

Yang et al. (2022) found that positive testimonials can strengthen consumer trust and reduce uncertainty, thereby encouraging purchasing decisions. Relevant and authentic testimonials may increase consumers' confidence that a product will meet their expectations. Similarly, Satrio and Pudjoprastyono (2022), Firli et al. (2021), and Kurniawan and Susanto (2020) reported that testimonials significantly influence consumer purchase intention.

Research Objectives

This study aims to examine and analyze the effects of celebrity endorsement, brand image, and testimonials on purchase intention toward Scarlett Whitening products in Pekanbaru.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purchase Intention

According to Kotler and Keller, as cited in Sari (2022), purchase intention is a consumer response to a product that indicates a willingness or tendency to purchase it. Siahaan, as cited in Sari (2022), defines purchase intention as a consumer's preference to purchase one brand rather than a competing brand. As consumers identify their needs, search for relevant information, and evaluate available alternatives, they may develop an internal intention to make a purchase.

According to Schiffman and Kanuk, as cited in September (2022), purchase decisions are influenced by several factors. Brand recognition is associated with perceived product quality and price, while brand image contributes to consumers' evaluation of available alternatives. External influences may also be communicated through word of mouth. In addition, marketing activities such as television advertising, social-media promotion, and printed promotional materials can stimulate consumers' purchase intention.

According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2016), purchase intention can be measured using four main indicators: (1) transactional interest, (2) preferential interest, (3) referential interest, and (4) exploratory interest.

Celebrity Endorsement

Soesatyo and Rumambi (2015) define celebrity endorsement as the use of well-known public figures, such as actors, entertainers, or athletes, to communicate messages about particular products. The objective is to influence consumers through the celebrity's reputation and achievements. Shimp (2017) emphasizes that endorser trustworthiness is important because consumers are more likely to respond positively to figures perceived as honest, credible, and reliable. Arora (2017) further explains that the use of celebrities in advertising can increase consumer trust, improve evaluations of products and advertisements, and strengthen purchase intention. Thus, greater celebrity visibility may increase consumer attention to the endorsed product and encourage purchase intention.

Erdogan (2015) provides an in-depth discussion of the factors that determine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. The principal indicators include: (1) credibility, (2) similarity or suitability, (3) familiarity, and (4) likeability.

Brand Image

According to Keller (2016), brand image refers to consumers' perceptions of a brand as reflected in their memories and associations, even in the absence of direct interaction with the product. Brand image is commonly reflected in the strength, favorability, and uniqueness of brand associations. Association strength refers to how firmly a brand is embedded in consumers' memories, favorability reflects the extent to which associations are positive and relevant, and uniqueness indicates how clearly the brand is differentiated from competitors. Brand image therefore plays an important role in positioning a brand in the market and influencing consumer purchase intention.

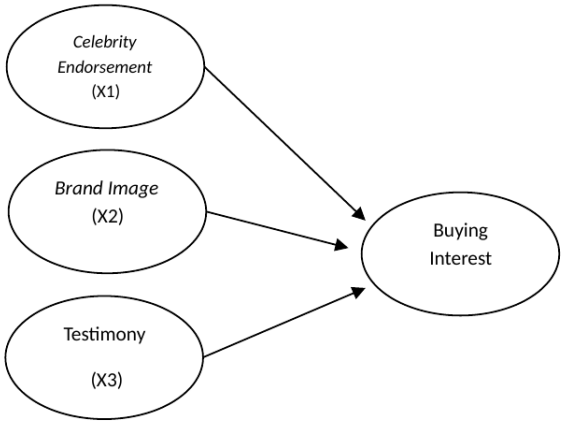
According to Kevin Lane Keller (2015), brand image can be assessed through four indicators: (1) strength of brand associations, (2) favorability of brand associations, (3) uniqueness of brand associations, and (4) relevance of brand associations.

Testimonials

According to Kotler and Keller (2016), testimonials are statements provided by customers or other parties who have used a product or service and whose experiences are used to support promotional communication. Testimonials can strengthen brand credibility and potential customers' trust by serving as a form of social proof. Testimonials from satisfied customers are frequently used in advertisements, websites, social media, and other promotional media to persuade potential consumers and may have a substantial influence on purchasing decisions, particularly in digital environments.

According to Robin Ohanian (2015), testimonial effectiveness may be assessed through three indicators: (1) expertise, (2) trustworthiness, and (3) attractiveness.

Conceptual Framework



Source: Developed from Previous Research, 2024

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Relationships among Variables and Hypotheses

Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity endorsement can play an important role in increasing purchase intention because celebrities may influence consumer perceptions and behavior. Chung and Cho (2017) explain that celebrities can transfer symbolic meaning to the brands they endorse, thereby creating an emotional connection between consumers and products. This association can increase product attractiveness and differentiation. Celebrity credibility, including expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, also contributes to consumer trust in the endorsed product (Dwivedi et al., 2016). Thus, the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement may arise from the combined effects of credibility and emotional appeal.

Ahmad (2018) found that celebrity endorsement can increase consumer trust and purchase intention, particularly in competitive markets, although the study did not compare the effects of local and international celebrities across different market segments. Utami (2021) similarly reported that digital influencers significantly affect purchase intention in digital marketing, but did not directly compare their effectiveness with that of traditional celebrities. These findings generally support a positive effect of endorsement while indicating opportunities for further examination across different contexts.

H1: Celebrity Endorsement Has a Positive Effect on Purchase Intention toward Scarlett Whitening Products in Pekanbaru

Brand Image

Kevin Lane Keller (2016) explains that brand image is important in shaping purchase intention because strong and relevant brand associations can influence consumers' perceptions of product value and quality. A positive brand image can strengthen consumer trust and loyalty, which in turn may increase purchase intention. David A. Aaker (2015) similarly emphasizes that a strong brand image can influence purchasing decisions because consumers tend to prefer brands they perceive as trustworthy and distinct from competitors. Research by Sari and Putri (2020) and Susanto (2017) supports the importance of brand image by showing a positive relationship between brand image and purchase intention in different product categories. These findings suggest that a favorable brand image can strengthen consumer relationships and encourage purchase intention.

H2: Brand Image Has a Positive Effect on Purchase Intention toward Scarlett Whitening Products in Pekanbaru

Testimonials

According to Hartono (2019), testimonials can increase purchase intention by providing credible social proof regarding product quality and benefits. Testimonials from satisfied customers or trusted third parties may increase potential consumers' trust by reinforcing perceptions of product value. In marketing contexts, effective testimonials can strengthen the reputation of a product or brand and reduce uncertainty prior to purchase. Kurniawan (2021) likewise emphasizes that testimonials from credible sources can strengthen consumer trust, reinforce brand messages, and influence purchasing decisions in competitive markets.

Wijaya (2019) found that consumer testimonials positively affect purchase intention toward electronic products, with favorable testimonials strengthening trust and purchasing decisions. Yuniarti and Widiastuti (2022) similarly found that testimonials increase purchase intention toward skincare products by strengthening consumers' perceptions of quality and confidence in purchasing. Together, these studies indicate that favorable testimonials can increase purchase intention by reinforcing trust and positive product perceptions.

H3: Testimonials Have a Positive Effect on Purchase Intention toward Scarlett Whitening Products in Pekanbaru

METHOD

The population of this study comprises consumers in Pekanbaru City who have an interest in purchasing Scarlett Whitening products. The exact size of this population is unknown.

Sample

Using the Roscoe rule of thumb, the sample size was set at 120 respondents. Participants were selected using accidental sampling.

Operational Definition of Variables

Table 2. Operational Definitions of Variables

Number	Variable	Indicators	Source	Scale
1.	Purchase Intention (Y)	Transactional Interest Preferential Interest Referential Interest Exploratory Interest	Schiffman & Kanuk, 2016	Interval
2.	Celebrity Endorsement (X1)	Credibility Similarity or Suitability Familiarity Likeability	Erdogan, 2015	Interval
3.	Brand Image (X2)	The strength of brand associations Brand association favorability The uniqueness of brand associations Relevance of brand associations	Keller, K. L, 2015	Interval
4.	Testimonials (X3)	Expertise Trustworthiness Attractiveness	Robin Ohanian, 2015	Interval

Source: Processed Research Data, 2024

Data Analysis Techniques

The validity test was conducted to determine whether the questionnaire items adequately measured the constructs they were intended to measure. An item was considered valid when its corrected item-total correlation (CITC) value was greater than 0.30 and invalid when the value was below 0.30. The reliability test was used to assess the internal consistency of respondents' answers. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha (α); an instrument was considered reliable when Cronbach's alpha was at least 0.60, whereas a coefficient below 0.60 indicated inadequate reliability.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to examine the effects of celebrity endorsement, brand image, and testimonials on purchase intention toward Scarlett Whitening products in Pekanbaru, both simultaneously and partially. The regression model is expressed as follows: $Y = a + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + \beta 3X3 + \varepsilon$.

Hypothesis Testing

According to Ghozali (2018), the t-test is used to evaluate hypotheses concerning population parameters on the basis of sample statistics. The null hypothesis (H0) represents the absence of a statistically significant effect, whereas the alternative hypothesis (Ha) represents the presence of an effect. The decision criteria applied in this study are as follows: (1) H0 is accepted when the calculated t-value is less than or equal to the critical t-value or when the significance value is greater than α; and (2) H0 is rejected when the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value or when the significance value is less than α.

Table 3. Respondent Characteristics

	Gender	Total
1.	Male	59
2.	Female	61
Age		
3.	< 20 years	29
4.	21-30 years	78

5.	31-40 years	8
6.	> 40 years	5
Educational Attainment		
7	Elementary School	2
8	Senior High School	68
9	Undergraduate/Equivalent	50
Occupation		
10	Student	60
11	Private-sector Employee	41
12	Self-employed	11
13	Civil Servant	4
14	Other	4
Monthly Income		
15	< IDR 2,500,000	30
16	IDR 2,500,000 - IDR 3,500,000	33
17	IDR 3,500,000 - IDR 4,500,000	29
18	> IDR 4,500,000	28

Source: Researcher's Processed Data, 2024

Table 3 shows that, among the 120 respondents, 61 were female, making women the largest gender group. Most respondents were aged 21-30 years (78 respondents). In terms of educational attainment, the largest group consisted of senior high school graduates (68 respondents). With respect to occupation, 60 respondents were students, and the largest income category was IDR 2,500,000-IDR 3,500,000, comprising 33 respondents.

Normality Test

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to assess data normality. Data are considered normally distributed when the significance value exceeds 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). The test produced a significance value of 0.063, which is greater than 0.05; therefore, the data in this study were considered normally distributed.

Coefficient of Determination Test (R^2)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates the proportion of variation in the dependent variable that can be explained jointly by the independent variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Quality Test Results

Coefficient of Determination Test (R^2)

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination Test Results (R^2)

Type	R	*R Square*	*Adjusted R Square*	*Std. Error of the Estimate*
1	.849a	.720	.713	. 5999639

Source: SPSS 21 Processed Data

As shown in Table 4, the adjusted R-squared value is 0.713, indicating that celebrity endorsement, brand image, and testimonials jointly explain 71.3% of the variation in purchase intention toward Scarlett Whitening products in Pekanbaru. The remaining 28.7% is explained by other variables not included in this study.

1. **Multiple Linear Regression Analysis**

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to describe the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The regression equation includes a constant (intercept) and regression coefficients representing the contribution of each independent variable.

Table 5. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Type		*Unstandardized Coefficients*		Interpretation
		B	*Std. Error*	
1	(*Constant*)	.413	.173	
	Product Quality	.356	.106	Positive Effect
	Lifestyle	.334	.073	Positive Effect
	Electronic Word of Mouth	.232	.101	Positive Effect

Source: SPSS Processed Data, 2023

Based on Table 5, the estimated multiple linear regression equation is as follows:

Y = a + b1X1 + b2X2 + b3X3

Y (Purchase Intention) = 0.413 + 0.356 Celebrity Endorsement + 0.334 Brand Image + 0.232 Testimonials

Hypothesis Testing

At a 5% significance level, the critical t-value used in this study is 1.980. The decision criteria are as follows: (1) if the calculated t-value exceeds the critical t-value and the significance value is below 0.05, the hypothesis is accepted; and (2) if the calculated t-value is below the critical t-value and the significance value exceeds 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 6. Partial Hypothesis Test Results

Type	t	Sig.	Interpretation
Celebrity Endorsement	3.374	.001	Positive and significant effect
Brand Image	4.541	.000	Positive and significant effect
Testimonials	2.286	.024	Positive and significant effect

Source: SPSS 21 Processed Data

Discussion

The Effect of Celebrity Endorsement on Purchase Intention

Celebrity endorsement has a positive effect on purchase intention; therefore, the first hypothesis is accepted. Celebrity endorsement is a marketing strategy that uses a celebrity's public recognition to attract consumer attention and increase product appeal. Celebrities can reach broad audiences and may exert substantial influence on their followers, which can encourage interest in endorsed products. Through this strategy, companies may strengthen perceptions of exclusivity, credibility, and product quality.

The findings are consistent with Ahmad (2018), who reported that celebrity endorsement can increase consumer trust and purchase intention, particularly in competitive markets, although the study did not compare the relative influence of local and international celebrities. Utami (2021) likewise found that digital influencers have a significant effect in digital marketing, but did not compare their effectiveness with traditional celebrities across platforms and age groups. These studies support the positive role of endorsement while highlighting opportunities for further investigation across different contexts.

The Effect of Brand Image on Purchase Intention

Brand image has a positive effect on purchase intention; therefore, the second hypothesis is accepted. A strong brand image is an important consideration in consumer purchasing decisions. Accordingly, Scarlett Whitening should maintain favorable brand perceptions through consistent product quality and effective promotional activities. A positive brand image can increase product attractiveness and strengthen brand awareness, thereby influencing consumers when evaluating and selecting products.

The findings are consistent with Sari and Putri (2020), who found that brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention toward fashion products. A strong brand image can improve consumers' perceptions of product quality and value, thereby increasing their willingness to purchase. Susanto (2017) similarly reported a positive effect of brand image on purchase intention toward electronic products because a favorable image strengthens consumer confidence in product quality. These studies confirm that a positive brand image can encourage purchase intention across different product categories.

The Effect of Testimonials on Purchase Intention

Testimonials have a positive effect on purchase intention; therefore, the third hypothesis is accepted. More favorable testimonials are associated with stronger consumer purchase intention. In the highly competitive skincare industry, Scarlett Whitening needs to maintain product quality and provide clear product information across digital platforms. Testimonials help potential consumers evaluate products before purchasing. Positive testimonials can increase confidence in a product, whereas negative testimonials may create hesitation and reduce purchase intention.

The findings are consistent with Wijaya (2019), who found that positive testimonials increase trust and encourage purchase intention toward electronic products. Yuniarti and Widiastuti (2022) similarly reported that consumer testimonials strengthen perceived quality and confidence in purchasing skincare products. These findings confirm that positive testimonials can increase purchase intention by strengthening consumer trust and perceptions of product quality.

CONCLUSION

Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, the following conclusions are drawn: (1) celebrity endorsement has a positive effect on purchase intention; (2) brand image has a positive effect on purchase intention; and (3) testimonials have a positive effect on purchase intention.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed: (1) the company may use these results as a reference for evaluating and improving its marketing strategies as necessary; and (2) future researchers are encouraged to include additional variables that may influence purchase intention in order to broaden the explanatory scope of the model. Future studies may also examine different research objects, geographical areas, and sample characteristics to provide additional perspectives and research novelty.

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