



The influence of celebrity endorser characteristics on brand image: A case study of Vivo

*Tak-Jie Chan and Deenesha Selvakumaran
SEGi University, Malaysia

Izian Idris
Sunway University, Malaysia

Nor Azura Adzharuddin
Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

The use of celebrity endorsement in advertising and branding has set a global trend and proven to be a winning strategy in building a favourable image of a corporation. Although numerous brands have adopted this trend, it appears to be more common in the telecommunication industry as corporations that face numerous market challenges and competition employ this particular strategy to stand out amongst rivals. Many studies from the West have shown the effectiveness of using celebrities as endorsers in their marketing communication strategies. However, there have been limited studies exploring this in the context of Asia, particularly in Malaysia. This study aims to examine the influence of celebrity endorser characteristics on the brand image of Vivo, which has engaged Dato' Sri Siti Nurhaliza (one of Malaysia's top singers) as its endorser. The TEARS model was used as the theoretical foundation to guide the study. A quantitative survey was used to collect responses from 207 Vivo smartphone users, who were selected through the purposive sampling technique. Based on the correlation analysis, all the TEARS dimensions demonstrated a positive and significant influence with the brand image of Vivo. In addition, the results of the multiple regression analysis have shown that trustworthiness, expertise, and similarity were the predictors of brand image. The study concludes that celebrity endorser characteristics, namely trustworthiness, expertise, and similarity are pivotal in building a favourable image of the selected telecommunication brand in Malaysia. The study recommends that Vivo should focus on recruiting local celebrities as endorsers as they are well-known among the local community, and this can help to strengthen their marketing and boost their sales.

Keywords: **Celebrity endorsement, brand image, TEARS model, marketing communication, telecommunication industry**

INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of technology these days, the telecommunication services industry is at its peak with new brands being continuously developed for consumers due to the high demand (Hajar, Ibrahim, Darun, & Al-Sharafi, 2020; Stone, 2015). This has led to intense competition and the need for novel and unique marketing communication strategies to help brands stand out amongst rivals (Šerić, Gil-Saura, & Ruiz-Molina, 2014).

In the telecommunication industry, the main challenge faced by smartphone brands is the switching cost which makes it easier for consumers to switch to different brands that offer competitive prices and quality. One of the key factors that attributes to this is the poor quality of products or services experienced by consumers (Sultana, 2012). Hence, to remain sustainable in the competitive business environment, and to be the first choice among customers, companies create various packages that result in brand switching.

In marketing communication, one of the most effective promotional tools is celebrity endorsement (Rocha, de Oliveira & de Moura Engracia Giraldo, 2020). Various smartphone companies have used celebrity endorsements for their marketing and branding activities to excite and attract customers (Mudzakir, 2018). This is because advertisers believe that using celebrities who are popular can affect the advertising's effectiveness, brand recall and recognition, brand attitude, and purchase intention (Priyankara, Weerasiri, Dissanayaka, & Jinadasa, 2017; Raza, Isa, & Rani, 2019; Vien, Yun, & Fai, 2017). This is supported by Deepa and Giridhar (2018) who attested that the use of celebrity endorsements elevates the position of the advertiser and pushes the brand above its competitors, which allows the brand to create more awareness and develop a stronger presence among customers.

However, there are also counter-arguments to the use of celebrity endorsers. For instance, Koshy and Manohar (2017) found that the most common major risk in engaging celebrities to endorse a brand is negative publicity. The inconsistency in the professional popularity of celebrities is also a major concern as the expertise of these celebrities will determine the image of a brand. In addition, celebrities tend to flourish or fade over a particular time frame. According to Gupta (2017), new and emerging celebrities will portray different characteristics which result in different brand images. Furthermore, past studies claim that multiple celebrity endorsements have risks as they clutter the minds of consumers which eventually affect the brand image badly (Koshy & Manohar, 2017; Muda, Musa, & Putit, 2017).

In addition, differences in economic status as well as culture can also result in different outcomes (Tengku Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen & Manaf, 2020; Wang & Hariandja, 2016). Due to this notion, the use of the TEARS model was employed to investigate if celebrities help in changing purchase intention and brand awareness as well as to understand if they impact on the sales and brand image of the product, as there are so many brands in the market. The TEARS model has pull factors compared to other models because of the "respect" and "similarity" dimensions. Since respect is a norm for people in Malaysia (a country that has a high collectivistic culture), this is an important criterion which aligns with the study of Um and Lee (2015). On top of that, to be "similar" in terms of demographic is also crucial. For example, some Malaysians would prefer celebrities from their own country and whom they are proud of. Further, it should be noted that both these two dimensions were not well-addressed in the past studies (Cuomo, Foroudi, Tortora, Hussain, & Melewar, 2019; Qiu, Chen, & Lee, 2021).

Celebrities have different aspects that can influence consumer perception on a brand image. Previous studies have shown that celebrity endorsement does effect brand image (Mudzakir, 2018), and the results by Wang and Hairandja (2016) demonstrated

that a positive brand image can be achieved through celebrity endorsement. Additionally, Fitri (2018) examined the attitude of customers towards brand image based on the celebrities' credibility, attractiveness, familiarity and match up. However, the study did not include other variables such as the celebrity's expertise. Thus, the current study includes the expertise of the celebrity as one of the variables. More importantly, Tengku Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen and Manaf (2020) urged future studies to look into the celebrity's characteristics (e.g. credibility, attractiveness, trustworthiness, likeability) specifically rather than celebrity endorsement in general.

In this regard, Yeo, Tan, Goh, and Toh (2019) found that the expertise and trustworthiness of the celebrity are not factors that influence brand loyalty of sport products. In contrast, the study by Wan Mat, Kim, Abdul Manaf, Ing, and Abdul Adis (2019) found that physical attractiveness, trustworthiness were predictors, yielding inconsistent findings.

Although many studies have examined celebrity endorsement in different contexts, such as Indonesia (Hanafi & Irwansyah, 2017), India (Subbiah & Sathish, 2020), Africa (Zakari, Dogbe, & Asante, 2019; Ibidunni et al., 2018), China (Liu & Liu, 2019), Philippines (Arcega, Lagarico, & Ramos, 2019), including in the Malaysian setting (Abd Aziz, Omar, & Ariffin, 2019; Khong & Wu, 2013; Syed Mat Dom, Ramli, Lim, & Tan, 2016), most focused on international celebrities, while the use of local celebrities remain understudied. Moreover, using the TEARS model seems more appropriate for this study compared to Ohanian's (1990) source of credibility model due to the elements of respect and similarity which suites well with eastern cultural values.

Based on the gaps identified, therefore, the study aims to test the predicting factors of the celebrity endorser characteristic dimensions (trustworthiness, expertise, physical attractiveness, respect, similarity) for the brand image of Vivo.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The TEARS model of celebrity endorsement was founded by Terrence A. Shimp. This model is still applicable today to examine the dimensions of celebrity endorsement and has been adopted by Ahmad, Idris, Mason, and Chow, (2019) and Widjaja, (2015). According to Shimp (2003), there are two attributes that contribute to an endorser's success which are credibility and attractiveness and each consists of more distinct sub-attributes. To better facilitate the association of customers' minds to an endorser's characteristics, the acronym of TEARS was developed to represent five distinct dimensions, namely Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness, Respect, and Similarity. These dimensions are appropriate to be tested, especially in the Malaysian context, as respect is a common norm among Asians. In this context, celebrities are considered as respected icons or role models amongst the Malaysian community (Ahmad et al., 2019; Idris & Baharom, 2017). Therefore, it is more useful to test these dimensions as opposed to that of Ohanian's (1990) source of credibility which has a limited number of dimensions.

Celebrity Endorsement and its Characteristics

Celebrity endorser is a public figure who is recognised for his or her achievements in areas that resonate with that of the endorsed product (Karasiewicz & Kowalczyk, 2014). Thus, celebrity endorsement is a channel of brand communication where a celebrity acts as the spokesperson of a brand and certifies the brand by extending his

or her personality/popularity or expertise in a particular field to the brand (Lomboan, 2013). However, the usage of celebrities to endorse products must involve multiple considerations which includes the level of popularity, as well as whether the chosen celebrity can represent the character of the product being advertised (Dwivedi, 2016).

Brand Image

Brand image is the perception that customers have, which is usually reflected in the minds of the consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Brand image is built on the perception of consumers when they come in contact with a particular product or brand. The image of the brand relates to the attitude in the form of beliefs and preferences. This gives a sense of association and consumer confidence (Lee, Lee, & Wu, 2011), which results in the interpretation of consumers towards the product's characteristics and benefits in the market. Brand image is also related to the consumers' memory of the brand and whether these perceptions are strong or vice versa (Dewi, Edyanto, & Siagian, 2020). Brands that are established tend to hold a strong position when competing with other brands in the same market. This strong position in the market is caused by strong associations which will eventually build a powerful brand image. In other words, the more associations are related, the stronger the brand image is built (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012).

Relationship between Celebrity Endorser Characteristics, Brand Image, & Related Outcomes

Hermenda, Sumarwan, and Tinarpilla (2019) investigated the effects of social media influencer on the brand image of cosmetics in Indonesia. Their study found that celebrity endorsement does have a positive influence on the brand image. In the same way, Fitri (2018) analysed the dimensions of celebrity endorsement (credibility, attractiveness, familiarity, and match-up congruence) and found that all the tested indicators have a positive influence on brand image.

In his work, Mudzakir (2018) investigated the brand ambassador's influence, which comprised of four dimensions: congruence, credibility, attractiveness, and power, on the brand image of Oppo. His findings revealed that the brand ambassador's congruence as well as credibility have a positive influence on brand image whilst the attractiveness and power indicators do not. This suggests that results may vary according to the context of study as well as to how respondents perceive celebrity endorser differently. According to Wang and Hariandja (2016), who examined the influence of brand ambassador on the brand image of Tous Les Jours among Indonesians, the characteristics of brand ambassadors are significantly related to the brand image.

In another study, Hove (2019) examined the impact of celebrity endorsement on the brand image of Nash Paints in Harare, Zimbabwe. The results demonstrated that certain aspects of the celebrity endorser (attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise) have a positive relationship with brand image. In contrast, Mudzakir (2018) found that all the indicators tested including attractiveness demonstrate no significant relationship with the brand image; a significant departure from most past studies.

Similarly, in studying Yemeni consumers' perception on the influence of celebrity attributes on brand image, Alawadhi and Örs (2020) found that there is no positive relationship between celebrity attractiveness and trustworthiness towards the brand image. However, celebrity's expertise and likeability demonstrate a positive relationship with the brand image. As the results of past studies have been inconsistent throughout, this has motivated the researchers to carry out this study again to re-examine the dimensions that are regarded as prominent among the consumers in Malaysia.

Another study by Yoo and Jin (2013) looked at the effects of celebrity congruence on the audiences' attitudes. The dimensions studied were trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise. The results indicate that celebrity endorsement can be applied and goodwill has a positive relationship with the organisation. This study showed good congruence with the study of Malik, Sudhakar, and Dutta (2017) which found that celebrity multiplicity and activation are positively related with the brand image in the Indian context.

Ahmad et al. (2019) investigated the impact of young celebrity endorsers in social media advertisement, brand image, and purchase intention. The study involved 282 participants and utilised the stratified sampling technique. The results from the study showed that there are positive relationships between the similarity and respect of celebrity in social media advertisement and the brand image.

In his work, Gupta (2017) aimed to select the most suitable celebrity to maximise the reach of advertisement campaigns in India. The results of his study demonstrated that there is no positive relationship between the celebrities' image and the brand image of the endorsed brand. In contrast, Takaya (2017) who tested the importance of celebrity endorsement on the brand image of Oppo found that there is one. In the Korean telecommunications industry, Kang, Choi, and Choi (2019) examined the effect of celebrity endorsement on firm value and sustainability. They found that celebrity attractiveness and expertise positively impact firm value; however, trustworthiness of celebrity is not significant related to firm value.

In addition, Onu, Nwaulune, Adegbola, and Nnorom (2019) examined the relationship between physical attractiveness and trustworthiness of celebrity and consumer purchase intention in Nigerian telecommunication companies. The study yielded a positive and significant relationship between the factors studied with customer purchase intention. However, this study outcome contradicts the findings of Tuan Muhammad Faizal, Nik Muhammad Naziman and Samat (2019), who found that of the three investigated predictors, namely trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise of celebrity, only one (attractiveness) is significantly related to the buying intention of customers in Kelantan, whereas the other two are not.

In the luxury fashion brand, Wiedmann and von Mettenheim (2021) examined social influencer aspects (attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise) using the source credibility model and its influence on brand image, brand trust, brand satisfaction, purchase intention, as well as price premium via structural equation modelling. The findings revealed that trustworthiness and attractiveness are significant with the outcome variables, whilst expertise is not. This finding is in line with that of Zakari et al., (2019), who found that celebrity expertise does not have a direct impact on company reputation, but likeability, attractiveness, and trustworthiness do, in the context of the African telecommunication company.

Further, Muda, Musa and Putit (2012) explained that celebrity endorsers have the power to create an immediate effect by extending their specific charm and identity to the endorsed brand. These charms as well as identities then become attached to the brand as part of its image. To summarise, celebrity endorsements can enhance a brand image positively and help to increase the sales. Moreover, Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013) also highlighted that brand image consists of intangible values including imagery and feelings, which can be attributed to the consumers' associations with the brand over time. This notion is further strengthened by Choi and Rifon (2012), who attested that celebrity endorsement has become a pivotal marketing and branding element that consumers will look for in a brand.

Based on the discussion above, hence, the study hypothesised that:

H₁: There is a positive relationship between the celebrity's trustworthiness and Vivo's brand image.

H₂: There is a positive relationship between the celebrity's expertise and Vivo's brand image.

H₃: There is a positive relationship between the celebrity's physical attractiveness and Vivo's brand image.

H₄: There is a positive relationship between the respect of the celebrity and Vivo's brand image.

H₅: There is a positive relationship between the similarity of the celebrity and Vivo's brand image.

H₆: Celebrity characteristics (trustworthiness, expertise, physical attractiveness, respect, similarity) are predictors of Vivo's brand image.

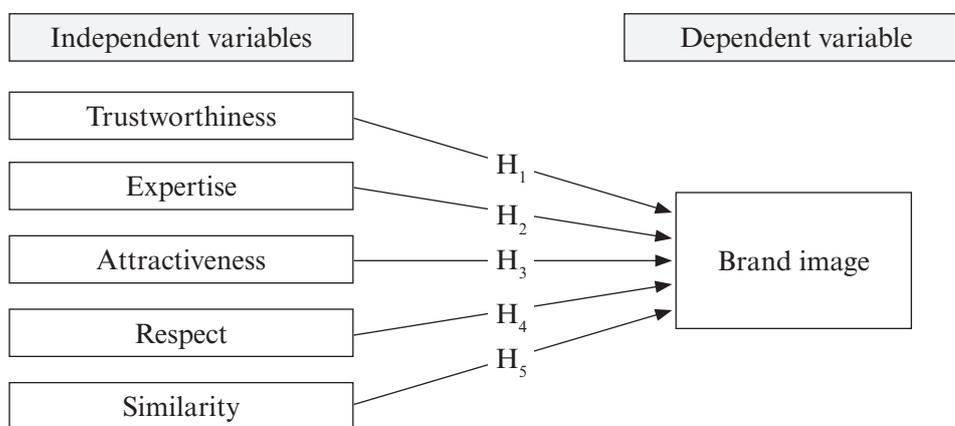


Figure 1. Conceptual model

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research utilised a quantitative method, questionnaire survey, as it allows measurement of data and statistics to elucidate the findings (Fisher & Buglear, 2010). Furthermore, Babbie (2015) mentioned that survey is one of the most suitable methods to be used in quantitative research design as it allows researchers to effectively measure the attitudes of respondents.

Sampling Procedure

The study utilised purposive sampling as its choice of sampling. Purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of respondents based on the qualities that they possess. This sampling method focuses on specific characteristics of respondents to help identify and select information-rich cases to achieve the research objectives (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Based on this premise, the criteria used to select respondents were if he/she owned a Vivo smartphone as well as is aware of Dato' Sri Siti Nurhaliza's endorsement for Vivo. Hence, to get accurate responses, researchers have included the following questions: "Do you own a Vivo smartphone?", "Are you aware of Dato' Sri Siti Nurhaliza endorsing the brand?" as screening questions in the survey to filter the accurate responses.

The researchers used the A-priori sample size technique (Sooper, 2020 as cited in Memon et al., 2020) via power analysis as it is the most prominent analysis in most

social science research as suggested by Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2017). Using the G*Power 3.1.9.2 software, the minimum sample size for the current study was derived at 92 (effect size: 0.15; power: 80; number of predictors: 5). Hence, with 207 valid responses, the current sample was deemed appropriate for statistical analysis. This was further supported by the notion of Sekaran and Bougie (2016) that a sample size between 30 and 500 is considered appropriate for social science research.

Instrument and Measurements

The research instrument was divided into three sections, Section A, B, and C with close-ended questions. **Section A** comprised questions concerning the demographics of respondents such as gender, type of customer, age, race, educational level as well as questions on ownership of Vivo smartphone, and awareness of Dato' Sri Siti Nurhaliza's endorsement. **Section B** consisted of questions on the dimensions of celebrity endorser characteristics (trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, respect, and similarity) that were adopted from several studies. The dimensions of trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise were adopted from Hove (2019), whereas dimensions of respect and similarity were adopted from Dissanayake and Ismail (2015). **Section C** comprised of items related to brand image that were adapted from Malik et al. (2017). The items were measured using the five-point Likert-type scale which used values ranging from (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Slightly agree, (4) Agree, to (5) Strongly agree.

Data Collection Procedure

Researchers utilised Google Forms to post the survey online to collect data. The link to the Google Forms survey were distributed through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook. The researchers continued to send out the questionnaire until the targeted sample was achieved. All respondents were assured of their confidentiality and anonymity. Once the data were collected, the researchers filtered out invalid responses, that is, responses from those who were unaware of Dato' Sri Siti Nurhaliza endorsing Vivo, as well as those who did not own a Vivo smartphone. Data collection was carried out from Sept 17 – Oct 10, 2020 till the desired number of valid respondents was obtained.

Data Analyses and Statistical Significance

The analysis used in this study is correlation analysis which is a statistical method used to assess the strength of relationship between two variables. A high correlation is indicated when the variables have a strong relationship with each other while a weak correlation is reflected by variables that barely relate (Moore, Notz, & Flinger, 2013). Thus, this analysis method was found suitable to study the relationship between the dimensions of celebrity endorser characteristics and the brand image of Vivo. In addition, multiple regression analysis was used to determine which celebrity endorser characteristic is the best predictor of Vivo's brand image.

Pilot Test

To test the reliability and internal consistency of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted where 30 sets of questionnaires were distributed via Google Forms to the residents in Klang Valley. Table 1 displays the Cronbach's alpha values of the variables. The construct with the highest value for Cronbach's alpha was respect of celebrity with 0.874 and the lowest was the celebrity's trustworthiness with 0.789. All constructs tested were found reliable as the Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the threshold of 0.70 (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2015). Hence, reliability of the instrument was met.

Table 1. The value of Cronbach's alpha for six variables

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
Trustworthiness	0.789	5
Expertise	0.836	5
Attractiveness	0.860	5
Respect	0.874	5
Similarity	0.821	3
Brand Image	0.821	3

Normality Test

To ensure a normal distribution of the data, skewness and kurtosis analysis were further carried out. Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2018) mentioned that it is crucial for data to be normally distributed before any multivariate analysis can be conducted. It is considered that the data is normally distributed if the values that represent the skewness and kurtosis of the variables are in the range of -2 to $+2$, with a consideration of 5% sampling error (Siddiqi, 2014). With that, as Table 2 shows, the value for both the independent variables (IVs) and dependent variable (DV) are within the range of -2 and $+2$, thus, implying that data were normally distributed and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis can be conducted.

When there are two or more variables that are highly correlated, the multicollinearity issue will occur. According to Hou and Shiau (2019), to evaluate multicollinearity, an assessment of the variance inflation factors (VIF) need to be carried out. In this respect, Mayr and Zins (2012) mentioned that if the VIF value is greater than 10 and the tolerance value is not greater than 0.10, then there is an issue with the multicollinearity. Based on Table 2, the range of tolerance value is between 0.154 and 0.279 which indicates that it is greater than 0.10. On the other hand, the VIF values range between 3.586 and 6.503 which indicates that the values did not exceed 10. Hence, it can be concluded that there were no multicollinearity problems in this study.

Table 2. Skewness and kurtosis of the variables

Variable(s)	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis	Tolerance	VIF
Trustworthiness	5.00	25.00	-0.566	0.131	0.226	4.433
Expertise	5.00	25.00	-0.546	-0.135	0.198	5.062
Physical Attractiveness	5.00	25.00	-0.801	0.396	0.154	6.503
Respect	5.00	25.00	-0.644	0.323	0.161	6.202
Similarity	3.00	15.00	-0.730	-0.048	0.279	3.586
Brand Image	4.00	20.00	-0.906	0.831		

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

More than half (58.9%) of the respondents were females and the rest (41.1%) males. There were equal numbers (31.4%) of respondents in the age groups of 20–24 and 25–29 and the least number of respondents (3.4%) were in the age group of 35–39. This implies that a large number of the respondents were young adults. Nearly half of the respondents were Indians (47.3%), followed by Malays (28.1%). Over half of the respondents (61.4%) have obtained

their bachelor's degrees and the least number of respondents (14.0%) were master's degree holders. Thus, it can be concluded that most of the respondents were educated.

Table 3. Demographic profile of respondents ($n = 207$)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	85	41.1
	Female	122	58.9
Customer	Local	193	93.2
	International	14	6.8
Age	20–24	65	31.4
	25–29	65	31.4
	30–34	28	13.5
	35–39	7	3.4
	>39	42	20.3
Race	Malay	58	28.1
	Indian	98	47.3
	Chinese	33	15.9
	Other	18	8.7
Education	STPM/HSC/Diploma	51	24.6
	Bachelor's degree	127	61.4
	Master's degree	29	14.0

To answer the objective of the study, which is to ascertain the relationship between the influences of celebrity endorser characteristics (trustworthiness, expertise, physical attractiveness, respect, similarity) and the brand image of Vivo, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was utilised. Pearson's r value for all tested variables was positive and significant: trustworthiness ($r = 0.788$, $p = 0.000$), Expertise ($r = 0.767$, $p = 0.000$), Physical attractiveness ($r = 0.691$, $p = 0.000$), Respect ($r = 0.694$, $p = 0.000$) and Similarity ($r = 0.717$, $p = 0.000$), where the interpretation of the strength of relationship was based on Moore et al.'s (2013) indicators. Thus, it can be concluded that there are positive and highly significant relationships between the trustworthiness, expertise, and similarity of the celebrity with the brand image. In addition, physical attractiveness and respect of the celebrity were found to have positive, moderate and significant relationships with brand image. Hence, H_1 , H_2 , H_3 , H_4 and H_5 are all accepted.

Table 4. Correlation test on relationship between dimensions of celebrity endorser characteristics and brand image ($n=207$)

Dimensions of Celebrity Endorser Characteristics	Brand Image	
	r	p
Trustworthiness	0.788**	0.000
Expertise	0.767**	0.000
Physical Attractiveness	0.691**	0.000
Respect	0.694**	0.000
Similarity	0.717**	0.000

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

To determine the predictors of selected variables, namely trustworthiness, expertise, physical attractiveness, respect, and similarity, a multiple regression analysis was conducted (Table 5). The R value of 0.817 shows a high correlation between the brand image and the overall predicting variables (dimensions of celebrity endorser characteristics). The analysis variance with $F = 80.532$ was significant at the 0.05 level of significance. While the overall five predictors contributed to the 66.7% of the variation. The details of each independent variable explaining the variance of brand image are as follow: trustworthiness (62.1%), expertise (58.8%), physical attractiveness (47.7%), respect (48.2%) and similarity (51.4%).

However, the analysis indicates that only trustworthiness, expertise, and similarity under the celebrity endorser characteristics dimensions are the predicting factors that contribute to the brand image of Vivo, while physical attractiveness and respect are excluded. Based on the findings, there are other variables (33.3%) that are currently not included in this model that can contribute to the brand image. Hence, H_6 is partially supported.

Table 5. Multiple regression analysis of brand image with predictor variables

Predictor variables	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficients	
	β	Std. Error	Beta	p
(Constant)	3.010	0.000		0.000
Trustworthiness	0.383	0.707	0.444	0.000
Expertise	0.192	0.067	0.261	0.005
Physical attractiveness	-0.030	0.074	-0.042	0.686
Respect	-0.013	0.081	-0.016	0.874
Similarity	0.241	0.085	0.219	0.005
$F = 80.532$ $R = 0.817$	$df_1 = 5, df_2 = 201$ $R^2 = 0.667$	$P = 0.000$ Adjust $R^2 = 0.659$		

The results of the study are congruent with that of Hermanda et al. (2019) as well as Wang and Hariandja (2016) in which they found that influencers have a positive effect on brand image in the context of Indonesia. Takaya's (2017) study yielded a similar finding, where the relationship between the endorsing celebrity and the brand image is positively related in the telecommunication industry (Oppo). Fitri (2018) also proved that all the dimensions (trustworthiness, expertise, physical appearance, respect and similarity) can positively impact brand image, which also supports the results of the current study. This suggests that the findings obtained for the perception of consumers towards the brand image of Vivo is supported for the dimensions of attractiveness and similarity.

While Mudzakir's (2018) study found contradictory results where the brand ambassador and attractiveness did not positively influence the brand image of Oppo, the current findings confirm that the correlation between all the dimensions of celebrity endorser characteristics (trustworthiness, expertise, physical appearance, respect, similarity) and the brand image of Vivo are significant, thus, confirming all the proposed hypotheses as well. This corroborates with the findings of Hove (2019) as well as Yoo and Jin (2013) who found that three dimensions, namely attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise, have positive relationships with brand image. In addition, a study by Ahmad et al. (2019) in the Malaysian context found that there is a positive relationship between the influence of celebrity endorsement and brand image. The findings are similar to this study, hence, strengthening the concept of celebrity endorsement in influencing brand image.

Based on the discussion above, it is proven that the difference in cultural background plays a pivotal role in influencing the results of similar studies. However, the physical appearance of the celebrity is found to be an attribute to brand image which is supported by the findings of Hove (2019) and Fitri (2018). On the other hand, while Mudzakir (2018), Alawadhi and Örs (2020) as well as Yeo et al. (2019) indicated that there is no positive relationship between trustworthiness of celebrity and the brand image and loyalty, this has been contradictory with the current study where trustworthiness was found to be the best predicting variable for the brand image of Vivo.

However, the multiple regression analysis revealed that physical attractiveness and respect are not predictors. This results in H_6 only being partially accepted. However, this corroborates with the findings of Mudzakir (2018) as he found no significant influence of the attractiveness indicator on brand image. Alawadhi and Örs, (2020) also found that there is no significant relationship between the celebrity expertise and brand image, which makes it contradictory to the current findings.

Since the smartphone is now considered a necessity for many Malaysians, the functionality of the phone, its price, and its suitability will need to match the expectations of consumers. Therefore, regardless of the endorsing celebrity, as long as he/she can promote the important functions and features of the smartphone, consumers will be attracted to the product and brand (Shabrin, Khandaker, Abdul Kashem, Chan, & Susila, 2017). This is in line with the findings of Welden (2016) who claimed that customers develop loyalty and a favourable image of a product as a result of their experiences with the brand, rather than the celebrity endorsement. Thus, smartphone companies should focus on investing their technology to yield better consumer experiences.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study is to test the influence of celebrity endorser characteristics on the brand image of Vivo. The results show that all the variables tested — trustworthiness, expertise, physical appearance, respect, and similarity of the celebrity — have a positive and significant relationship with brand image. Further, the main factor that influences consumers in developing a positive perception towards the brand image of Vivo is the trustworthiness of the celebrity endorser. In summary, the findings of this research shows that all five dimensions of celebrity endorser characteristics guided by the TEARS model demonstrate a positive and significant relationship with the brand image of Vivo. However, not all the celebrity endorser characteristics are predictors, as physical appearance and respect were found to be excluded.

Implications of the study

Theoretically, the TEARS model has obviously helped the researchers to understand and obtain a better insight of celebrity endorsement by testing extra dimensions such as respect and similarity. The findings can guide smartphone companies to better target and strategise in order to attract consumers since different consumers display different attitudes and behaviours towards a brand. Thus, the researchers opted to not simply use any celebrity theoretical model as those used in Western-contextualised research instrument or framework, as certain elements/dimensions will need to be compromised to better cater to the local lens and practices, which has not been detailed in past literature.

In terms of practicality, advertising and marketing managers can effectively use the present findings as a brand's image is evidently a critical asset of any firm. With positive results for the brand image, the present study proves that using top Malaysian celebrities

for endorsement purposes does impact positively on sales and the recognition of a product or brand. As highlighted in literature, it clearly shows that the use of celebrity endorsement is a useful strategic tool for marketers to build brand image. The study also provides vital insights for marketing and branding managers on specific dimensions of celebrity endorser characteristics to focus on for their brands. Based on these findings, a celebrity who endorses a brand should possess every aspect of the TEARS' dimensions to build a positive consumer perception, as consumers pay attention to his or her trustworthiness, expertise, physical appearance, respect, and similarity.

Further, as trustworthiness emerged as the most prominent dimension, companies should pay considerable attention on the sincerity and reliability of the celebrity they hire to endorse their brand whereby the celebrity should be free from scandal and negative publicity.

Past research has also shown that local celebrities seen in a positive light can confidently build a brand image, thus, strengthening the notion that celebrities used for brand endorsement should be well-known to the local public. Thus, global brands who are intending to penetrate local markets should adopt a marketing strategy to localise their brand by building a connection with the local consumers using local celebrities, instead of signing costly contracts with international celebrities.

Limitations and Suggestion for Future Study

There are several limitations that were found in this study. By using the purposive sampling that only targets those who know the celebrity endorser of Vivo, the findings may not be generalisable to all customers of Vivo. In addition, while the sample ($n = 207$) meets the requirement for the quantitative study, the questionnaires were only distributed to the customers in the Klang Valley area. Future studies could fruitfully explore this issue further by extending the study to different parts of Malaysia, to obtain a more comprehensive view of Malaysians in regard to the overall perception of brands. Furthermore, the current study can be expanded by investigating different brands from the telecommunication industry to widen the varieties and strengthen the research topic.

Additionally, as the study only utilised close-ended questions, this may have led to limited responses from the respondents. Hence, future studies may include open-ended questions to widen the discussion and responses of the respondents, where the mixture of qualitative (interviews) or mixed methods (pragmatism) may provide much richer insights to the study topic. Different dimensions or attributes of the celebrity endorser characteristics may also be included and tested again for future studies.

Future research may also expand the results obtained from this study to other developing or developed economies as cultural differences may impact the findings, as literature has shown. This may provide a holistic view on how celebrity endorsement is perceived across cultures. Lastly, as this study only tested the direct relationship between the variables, future researchers may include moderating variables such as gender, income, education (Morissan, 2020) or other variables such as willingness to pay, price consciousness, loyalty, to name a few, to test these variables to make the model more robust and contribute further to the advertising and marketing scholarship.

Open Access: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC-BY 4.0) which permits any use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author(s) and the source are credited.

References

- Abd. Aziz, Z. D., Omar, M. K., & Ariffin, S. (2019). The effects of celebrity endorsements towards purchase intention among Malaysian millennials. *Religación. Revista De Ciencias Sociales Y Humanidades*, 4(14), 116–124.
- Ahmad, A. H., Idris, I., Mason, C., & Chow, S. K. (2019). The impact of young celebrity endorsements in social media advertisements and brand image towards the purchase intention of young consumers. *International Journal of Financial Research*, 10(5), 54–65.
- Alawadhi, R., & Örs, M. (2020). Effect of celebrity endorsement on consumers purchase intention in the mediation effect of brand image. *Journal of Business Research-Turk*, 12(1), 454–468.
- Arcega, R. C., Lagarico, R. F., & Ramos, M. A. R. (2019). The impact of celebrity endorsement on the buying behavior on the students of college of business administration in pup Manila 2019-2020. *International Journal of Advance Research and Innovative Ideas in Education*, 5(6), 772–802.
- Babbie, E. R. (2015). *The practice of social research* (14th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Choi, S. M., & Rifon, N. (2012). It is a match: The impact of congruence between celebrity image and consumer ideal self on endorsement effectiveness. *Psychology & Marketing*, 29(9), 639–650.
- Cuomo, M. T., Foroudi, P., Tortora, D., Hussain, S., & Melewar, T. C. (2019). Celebrity endorsement and the attitude towards luxury brands for sustainable consumption. *Sustainability*, 11, 6791.
- Deepa, L., & Giridhar, K. (2018). Celebrity endorsement and its impact on buying behavior of college students: A study in Shivamogga City. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 8(2), 194–203.
- Dewi, L. G., Edyanto, N., & Siagian, H. (2020). The effect of brand ambassador, brand image, and brand awareness on purchase decision of Pantene shampoo in Surabaya, Indonesia. *SHS Web Conference*, 76, 01023 (2020). DOI: 10.1051/shsconf/20207601023
- Dissanayake, D. R., & Ismail, D. N. (2015). Relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand attitude: With reference to financial services sector brands in Sri Lanka. In *Conference Proceedings of 6th International Conference on Business and Information (ICBI)* (pp. 472–487).
- Dwivedi, A. (2016). Celebrity endorsements, self-brand connection and relationship quality. *International Journal of Advertising*, 35(3), 486–503.
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1–4.
- Fisher, C., & Buglear, J. (2010). *Researching and writing a dissertation: An essential guide for business students* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Financial Times/Prentice Hall.
- Fitri, F. R. (2018). The influence of celebrity endorsement in social media Instagram on attitude towards brand and brand image to customer purchase intention: Study on Ayudia Bing Slamet for Rubylicious Brand. *Journal of Accounting Management and Economics*, 20(2), 7–17.
- Gupta, V. (2017). Celebrity endorsement - An analysis of brand image and celebrity image. *International Journal of Applied Marketing and Management*, 2(2), 32–38.
- Hair, J., Black, W., Babin, B., & Anderson, R. (2018). *Multivariate data analysis* (8th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning EMEA.
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G., T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2017). *A primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Hajar, M., Ibrahim, D., Darun, M., & Al-Sharafi, M. (2020). Value innovation activities in the wireless telecommunications service sector: A case study of the Malaysian market. *Journal of Global Business Insights*, 5(1), 57–72.
- Hanafi, L. P., & Irwansyah. (2017). Building brand image through celebrity endorsement in digital platform: A case study of Andien Aisyah as Cetaphil Indonesia's brand ambassador. In *Proceeding of the 4th Conference on Communication, Culture and Media Studies* (pp. 185–191).
- Hawkins, D., & Mothersbaugh, D. (2013). *Consumer behavior: Building marketing strategy* (12th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
- Hermanda, A., Sumarwan, U., & Tinaprilla, N. (2019). The effect of social media influencer on brand image, self-concept and purchase intention. *Journal of Consumer Sciences*, 4(2), 76–89.
- Hou, A., & Shiau, W. (2019). Understanding Facebook to Instagram migration: A push-pull migration model perspective. *Information Technology & People*, 33(1), 272–295.
- Hove, I. (2019). *The impact of celebrity endorsement on brand image at Nash*. Retrieved from <http://liboasis.buse.ac.zw:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/10991>

- Ibidunni, A. S., Olokundun, M. A., Ibidunni, O. M., Borishade, T. T., Falola, H. O., Salau, O. P., Amaihian, A. B., & Fred, P. (2018). Data on customer perceptions on the role of celebrity endorsement on brand preference. *Data in Brief*, 1107–1110.
- Idris, I., & Bahrom, F. H. (2017). *Celebrity endorsement in Malaysia*. Moldova: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Jalilvand, M. R., & Samiei, N. (2012). The effect of electronic word of mouth on brand image and purchase intention: An empirical study in the automobile industry in Iran. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 30(4), 460–476.
- Kang, M. Y., Choi, Y., & Choi, J. (2019). The effect of celebrity endorsement on sustainable firm value: Evidence from the Korean telecommunications industry. *International Journal of Advertising*, 38(4), 563–576.
- Karasiewicz, G., & Kowalczyk, M. (2014). Effect of celebrity endorsement in advertising activities by product type. *International Journal of Management and Economics*, 44, 74–91.
- Khong, K. W., & Wu, Y. L. (2013). Measuring the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumer behavioural intentions: A study of Malaysian consumers. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 14(3), 2–22.
- Koshy, L., & Manohar, S. (2017). *Influence of celebrity endorsement on brand image of grooming products*. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2969781>
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing management* (14th ed.). London, UK: Pearson.
- Lee, H.-M., Lee, C.-C., & Wu, C.-C. (2011). Brand image strategy affects brand equity after M&A. *European Journal of Marketing*, 45(7/8), 1091–1111.
- Liu, Y., & Liu, M. T. (2019). Celebrity poses and consumer attitudes in endorsement advertisements. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 31(4), 1027–1041.
- Lomboan, S. (2013). The impact of celebrity endorsement on brand image. *Journal EMDA*, 1(3), 788–795.
- Malik, A., Sudhakar, B. D., & Dutta, D. (2017). Management-based factors of sports celebrity endorsement and effect on brand image. *IIM Kozhikode Society & Management Review*, 7(1), 1–13.
- Mayr, T., & Zins, A. (2012). Extensions on the conceptualization of customer perceived value: Insights from the airline industry. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 6(4), 356–376.
- Memon, M. A., Ting, H., Cheah, J. H., Thurasamy, R., Chua, F., & Cham, T. H. (2020). Sample size for survey research: Review and recommendations. *Journal of Applied Structural Equation Modeling*, 4(2), i–xx.
- Moore, D. S., Notz, W. I., & Flinger, M. A. (2013). *The basic practice of statistics* (6th ed.). New York, NY: W. H. Freeman and Company.
- Morissan. (2020). Effect of celebrity endorsers in advertising in Indonesia: A review of consumer-celebrity relations. *SEARCH Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 12(1), 79–92.
- Muda, M., Musa, R., & Putit, L. (2012). Breaking through the clutter in media environment: How do celebrities help? *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 42, 374–382.
- Muda, M., Musa, R., & Putit, L. (2017). Celebrity endorsement in advertising: A double-edged sword. *Journal of Asian Behavioural Studies*, 2(3), 21–32.
- Mudzakir, F. (2018). The influence of brand ambassador usage towards brand image of Oppo. In *Industrial Research Workshop and National Semina* (pp. 648–654).
- Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 19(2), 39–52.
- Onu, C. A., Nwaulune, J., Adegbola, E. A., & Nnorom, G. (2019). The effect of celebrity physical attractiveness and trustworthiness on consumer purchase intentions: A study on Nigerian consumers. *Management Science Letters*, 9, 1965–1976.
- Priyankara, R., Weerasiri, S., Dissanayaka, R., & Jinadasa, M. (2017). Celebrity endorsement and consumer buying intention with relation to the television advertisement for perfumes. *Management Studies*, 5(2), 128–148.
- Qiu L., Chen, X., & Lee, T. J. (2021). How can the celebrity endorsement effect help consumer engagement? A case of promoting tourism products through live streaming. *Sustainability*, 13, 8655.
- Raza, M., Isa, N. M., & Rani, S. H. (2019). Effect of celebrity-endorsed advertisement and entrepreneurial marketing on purchase behavior of smartphone consumers in Pakistan. *Journal of Management Sciences*, 6(1), 15–29.

- Rocha, P. I., de Oliveira, J. H. C., & de Moura Engracia Giraldo, J. (2020). Marketing communications via celebrity endorsement: An integrative review. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, 27(7), 2233–2259.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2015). *Research methods for business students* (7th ed.). London, UK: Pearson Education Limited.
- Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2016). *Research methods for business: A skill-building approach* (7th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Šerić, M., Gil-Saura, I., & Ruiz-Molina, M. E. (2014). How can integrated marketing communications and advanced technology influence the creation of customer-based brand equity? *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 39, 144–156.
- Shabrin, N., Khandaker, S., Abdul Kashem, S., Chan, K. H., & Susila, T. (2017). Factors affecting smartphone purchase decisions of Generation-Y. *The Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government*, 23(1), 47–65.
- Shimp, T. A. (2003). *Advertising, promotion and supplemental aspects of integrated marketing communications* (6th ed.). Mason, OH: Thomson South-Western.
- Siddiqi, A. (2014). An observatory note on tests for normality assumptions. *Journal of Modelling Management*, 9(3), 290–305.
- Stone, M. (2015). The evolution of the telecommunications industry - What can we learn from it? *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, 16, 157–165.
- Subbiah, P. V., & Sathish, A. S. (2020). Exploring the influence of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention and brand loyalty among rural youth. *Journal of Critical Review*, 7(6), 426–431.
- Sultana, A. (2012). *The effect of TV advertising on consumers brand switching behavior*. Moldova: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Syed Mat Dom, S. M., Ramli, H. S., Lim, A. L. C., & Tan, T. F. (2016). Determinants of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in advertisement. *The Journal of Developing Areas* 50(5), 525–535.
- Takaya, R. (2017). The effect of celebrity endorsement on brand image and trust brand and its impact to purchase intention. Case study: Oppo smartphone. *Business and Entrepreneurial Review*, 17(2), 183–196.
- Tengku Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen, T. S. A., & Manaf, A. M. A. (2020). Malaysian female users' purchase intentions of celebrity-endorsed products on Instagram: A parasocial interaction perspective. *SEARCH Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 12(1), 93–109.
- Tuan Muhammad Faizal, T. A., Nik Muhammad Naziman, Y. H., & Samat, M. F. (2019). Celebrity endorser and consumer buying intention in Kelantan. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 9(9), 722–735.
- Um, N. H., & Lee, W. N. (2015). Korean advertising practitioners' perspectives on celebrity endorsement. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 21(1), 33–54.
- Vien, C. V., Yun, C. T., & Fai, P. L. (2017). The effect of celebrity endorsement on brand attitude and purchase intention. *Journal of Global Business and Social Entrepreneurship (GBSE)*, 4, 141–150.
- Wan Mat, W. R., Kim, H. J., Abdul Manaf, A. A., Ing, G. P., & Abdul Adis, A. A. (2019). Young Malaysian consumers' attitude and intention to imitate Korean celebrity endorsements. *Asian Journal of Business Research*, 9(3), 1–23.
- Wang, F., & Hariandja, E. S. (2016). The influence of brand ambassador on brand image and consumer purchasing decision: A case of Tous Les Jours in Indonesia. *International Conference on Entrepreneurship*, 3(2), 292–306.
- Welden, O. V. (2016). *Influence of celebrity endorsement of smartphones in creating customer loyalty among university youth in Nairobi* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Nairobi, Nairobi.
- Widjaja, A. A. (2015). The impact of L'Oréal Paris fall repair's celebrity endorsement towards consumer purchase intention with brand image as a mediating variable. *iBuss Management*, 3(2), 214–221.
- Wiedmann, K. P., & von Mettenheim, W. (2021). Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise – social influencers' winning formula? *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 30(5), 707–725.
- Yeo, S. F., Tan, C. L., Goh, M. L., Toh, H. Y. (2019). Impact of celebrity endorsements on brand loyalty in sports products. *International Journal of Engineering and Advanced Technology*, 8(6S3), 473–478.
- Yoo, J., & Jin, Y. J. (2013). Effects of celebrity organization congruence on audience attitudes, preferences, and credibility ratings for goodwill ambassadors. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 23(6), 620–636.
- Zakari, M., Dogbe, C. S. K., & Asante, C. (2019). Effect of celebrity endorsement on telecommunication companies' reputation: The moderating role of celebrity characteristics. *Management Research Review*, 42(12), 1297–1314.

Tak-Jie Chan

is a lecturer at the Faculty of Business, Accountancy, Communication and Hospitality Management, SEGi University. His area of research includes Corporate Social Responsibility, Marketing & Corporate Communication, Organisational Communication and topics related to Strategic Communication Management, which all combine to support his hybrid profession linking communication with management and marketing. He can be contacted at chantakjie@segi.edu.my

Deenesha Selvakumaran

is a student at Faculty of Business, Accountancy, Communication and Hospitality Management, SEGi University. She obtained her bachelor's degree in mass communication and her research interests include Public Relations, Advertising and Celebrity Endorsement. She can be contacted at deeneshaselvakumaran@gmail.com

Izian Idris, PhD

is an associate professor and Programme Leader of Department of Marketing at Sunway University, Malaysia. She received her PhD in Marketing from University of Liverpool UK. She did her MA Marketing and BSc (Hons) Urban Estate Management in Liverpool John Moores University, UK. She actively publishes in journals and books related to Marketing Communications and Marketing Gerontology. She can be contacted at iziani@sunway.edu.my

Nor Azura Adzharuddin, PhD

is an associate professor and currently, the Head of Communication Department at Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia. Her research interests include New Media & Traditional Media Advertising, Celebrity Endorsements in Advertising, Integrated Marketing Communication Strategies, and Corporate Communication. She can be contacted at zurh@upm.edu.my
