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Celebrity Endorsement and Brand Image Synergy: The Role of Brand Awareness in Driving Buying Decision for Scarlett Products

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of celebrity endorsement and brand image on purchasing decisions, with brand awareness as a mediating variable among Scarlett product consumers in Kendari City. A quantitative approach was employed using a survey method for data collection. Data from 240 respondents were obtained through an online questionnaire and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS software. The results indicate that both celebrity endorsement and brand image significantly affect brand awareness and purchasing decisions. Furthermore, brand awareness mediates the relationship between celebrity endorsement, brand image, and purchasing decisions. These findings align with the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), which emphasizes that consumer decisions are influenced not only by functional aspects but also by symbolic and social meanings attached to brands. The practical implications of this research suggest that companies should integrate strong branding strategies with carefully selected celebrity endorsers to enhance consumer visibility and trust. This study also contributes theoretically to the development of consumer behavior models based on cultural symbolism, especially within the context of local brands in the digital era.

Keywords: Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Image, Brand Awareness, Buying Decision, Consumer Culture Theory

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1. Introduction

Scarlett is one of the fastest growing local beauty brands in Indonesia. Since its founding in 2017, Scarlett has introduced a variety of beauty products formulated to help brighten and maintain healthy skin, both for the body, face, and hair. The brand's success lies not only in the quality of its products, but also in its innovative marketing strategy. In building brand image and increasing the appeal of its products, Scarlett adopts a celebrity endorsement-based marketing strategy. This brand actively collaborates with a number of well-known celebrities to promote its products, in the hope of increasing consumer awareness and trust in the brand. This strategy is in line with the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) which emphasizes that consumption is not just an economic transaction, but also has symbolic, emotional, and social dimensions. (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Consumers tend to associate products with public figures they admire, creating an emotional attachment that can strengthen buying decisions. (Fischer & J. Arnold, 1990).

CCT also explains how social and cultural relationships play an important role in the interactions between consumers and brands. (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Peñaloza & Gilly, 1999). In this context, celebrity endorsement is becoming an increasingly popular factor in influencing buying decisions. (Gandhiodaa & Tanjung, 2024; Schimmelpennig & Hunt, 2020). Wang & Scheinbaum, (2018) shows that celebrity



endorsement done properly can increase purchase intention, especially when the celebrity chosen has an image that is in line with the promoted product. In addition to having a direct impact on buying decisions, this strategy also strengthens brand awareness. Researchers argue that effective celebrity endorsement can increase Brand Awareness through the process of meaning transfer, especially for brands that are still in the stage of expanding their reach (Ilicic & Webster, 2011; Tian et al., 2021).

Apart from celebrity endorsements, brand image also plays a crucial role in shaping buying decisions. Harto et al., (2021) emphasizes that brand image functions as a reference for consumers in assessing the quality and excellence of a product. Consumers tend to choose products with a strong brand image because it provides a sense of security regarding the quality offered. (Febrian et al., 2022; Muhammad & Aransyah, 2022). A positive image not only increases consumer trust, but also strengthens the memory of a brand. (Seo et al., 2020). Buyukdag, (2021) affirms that a positive brand image creates a strong perception in the minds of consumers, which ultimately increases the likelihood of consumers remembering and choosing the brand. In addition, brand awareness plays a crucial role in making buying decisions. Febriantoro, (2020) revealed that consumers tend to trust and are more likely to buy products from well-known brands compared to new, unfamiliar brands. In this case, brand awareness functions as a mediator that strengthens the relationship between celebrity endorsement and buying decision. (Olmedo et al., 2020; Princess & Hendratmi, 2022). In addition, the higher the level of brand awareness, the greater the influence of brand image on buying decisions. (Hussain, 2020). Abbas et al., (2021) and Panwar et al., (2019) also stated that brand awareness and brand image work together to form positive consumer perceptions, which ultimately increases their tendency to buy a product. Brand awareness acts as a mediator that connects brand image with buying decisions, increasing the likelihood of consumers choosing products that are already widely known. (Zia et al., 2021).

Despite implementing an aggressive marketing strategy, Scarlett still faces stiff competition in the market. Based on data from Compass, (2022), Scarlett ranked second in the online marketplace during the period of April–June 2022. This shows that despite its increasing popularity, Scarlett is still unable to outperform its main competitors. Therefore, a more effective marketing strategy is needed to increase brand competitiveness and strengthen Scarlett's position in the beauty market. Based on the background, this study aims to analyze the influence of celebrity endorsement and brand image on buying decisions for Scarlett products, with brand awareness as a mediating variable. Therefore, this study is designed to answer the main question: "How do celebrity endorsement and brand image influence consumer buying decisions, and to what extent does brand awareness mediate the relationship on Scarlett products in Kendari City?". By understanding the role of celebrity endorsement and brand image in building brand awareness and its impact on Buying Decisions, this study is expected to provide useful insights for developing more optimal marketing strategies for Scarlett.

2. Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with the aim of analyzing the influence of Celebrity Endorsement and Brand Image on Buying Decisions, with Brand Awareness as a mediating variable on Scarlett product consumers in Kendari City and its surroundings. Data were obtained from 402 respondents through questionnaires distributed from January to February 2025. However, only 240 questionnaires were filled out and qualified for further analysis. The purposive sampling method was used in this study, which ensures that the selected respondents have characteristics relevant to the research objectives. Measurements were made using a two-pole scale with a range of 1 to 10, where a value of 1 represents "strongly disagree" and a value of 10 represents "strongly agree" (Hasan & Sohail, 2020). In addition to the questionnaire, a survey was also conducted to better understand consumer perceptions of the influence of celebrity endorsement and brand image on brand awareness and buying decisions. Data analysis was conducted to identify patterns of relationships

between these variables to gain a clearer understanding of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement and brand image-based marketing strategies in increasing consumer brand awareness and buying decisions. The results of this study are expected to provide a significant contribution to the development of Scarlett's marketing strategy to be more effective and sustainable.

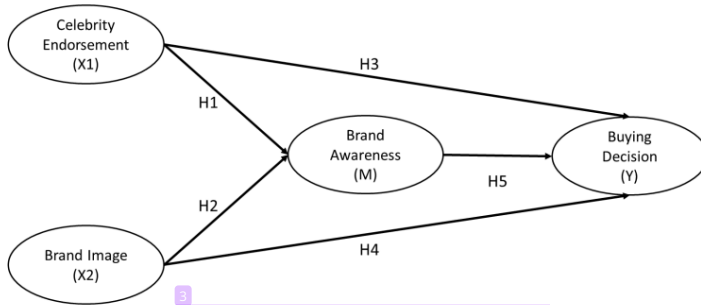


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of Research

Measurement of Instrument Validity and Reliability

The instruments used in this study to measure the variables of Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Awareness, Brand Image, and Buying Decision were evaluated in terms of validity and reliability to ensure the accuracy of the analysis results. To ensure that each item in the construct truly reflects the concept being measured, the validity of the instrument was tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) (Hair et al., 2017). Meanwhile, the reliability of the instrument is assessed based on the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which measures the level of internal consistency between items in each variable. (Charter, 1999). The following is an explanation of each measuring instrument used in this study.

Validity and Reliability Measurement Table

Variables and Indicators	β	Cronbach Alpha	Average Variance Extracted	Construct Reliability
<i>Celebrity Endorsement</i>		0.65	0.5	0.7
X1.1 <i>Attractiveness</i>	0.31			
X1.2 <i>Trustworthiness</i>	0.56			
X1.3 <i>Match-up:(R. Hutagaol & Safrin, 2022)</i>	0.84			
<i>Brand Awareness</i>		0.87	0.7	0.9
Y1.1 <i>Brand Recall</i>	0.79			
Y1.2 <i>Brand Recognition</i>	0.94			
Y1.3 <i>Top of Mind:(Jennifer & Saputra, 2021;Sari et al., 2021)</i>	0.79			
<i>Brand Image</i>		0.71	1	0.7
X2.1 <i>Symbolic Value</i>	0.67			
X2.2 <i>Uniqueness</i>	0.65			
X2.3 <i>Reputation:(Subagja & Hakim, 2020)</i>	0.68			
<i>Buying Decision</i>		0.76	0.5	0.8
Y2.1 <i>Product Preference</i>	0.84			
Y2.2 <i>Repurchase Intention</i>	0.68			

Y2.3 Price 0.64
 Consideration:(Maryati & Khoiri.M, 2021;Winasis et al., 2022)

Source: Author's data processing

Hypothesis Testing

This study uses Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS 24 software to test the formulated hypothesis. The selection of SEM is based on several advantages that are in accordance with the needs of this study. First, the ability to test complex relationships. SEM allows simultaneous analysis of various relationships between independent and dependent variables (Hair et al., 2019). This is relevant because this study involves several main variables, namely Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Image, Brand Awareness, and Buying Decision, which have a relationship that influences each other. Second, the ability to test the theoretical model as a whole. SEM allows testing of the theoretical model as a whole, not just the partial relationship between variables (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). This approach provides a more holistic understanding of the interaction between factors that influence Buying Decision, especially in the context of the influence of Celebrity Endorsement and Brand Image through Brand Awareness. Third, confirm the validity and reliability of the measurement instrument. SEM uses Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to ensure that the instruments used in this study are valid and reliable. CFA functions to evaluate the suitability of data with the factor structure that has been determined based on existing theories (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

3. Results And Discussion

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

The test results show that all constructs meet the goodness of fit criteria, which indicates that the model used in this study is in accordance with the data obtained. This is supported by the values of Chi-square, RMSEA, GFI, AGFI, CMIN/DF, TLI, and CFI which indicate that the developed model has a good level of fit. Thus, this research instrument can be relied on to measure the relationship between variables accurately and consistently.

Hypothesis Testing

In this study, CFA was used to validate the constructs of Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Image, Brand Awareness, and Buying Decision. The test results showed that all constructs met the goodness of fit criteria, with indicators such as Chi-square, RMSEA, GFI, AGFI, CMIN/DF, TLI, and CFI indicating that the model fits the research data.

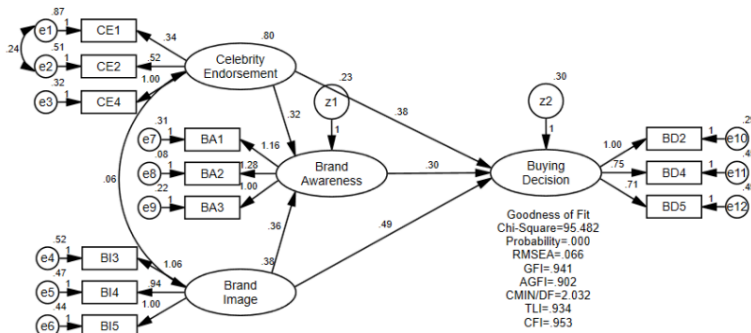


Figure 2 Structural Model Output

The results of the SEM AMOS analysis using Modification Indices (MI) show that connecting e1 and e2 can reduce residual error and improve model fit. According to Arbuckle, (2014), MI is used to identify correlations between error terms that can improve the model fit without changing the theoretical structure. Therefore, this modification is applied to improve the validity of the tested model.

Table Structural Equation Model Feasibility Testing Index

Goodness of Fit	Cut-off Value	Results	Information
χ^2 -Chi-Square	64,001	95,482	Margin Fit
Probability	≥ 0.05	.000	Margin Fit
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	.066	Fit
GFI	≥ 0.90	.941	Fit
AGFI	≥ 0.90	.902	Fit
CMIN/DF	≤ 2.00	2,032	Margin Fit
TLI	≥ 0.95	.934	Margin Fit
CFI	≥ 0.95	.953	Fit

Source: Author's data processing

This research model shows that the Chi-Square value is 95.482, which exceeds the limit value of 64.001. In addition, the probability value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicates that this model is statistically significant. However, this model is categorized as a marginal fit based on the Chi-Square/df (CMIN/DF) value of 2.032, which is slightly higher than the ideal limit of 2.0. Meanwhile, other goodness of fit indicators show acceptable results, with the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of 0.066, the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) of 0.941, the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) of 0.902, the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) of 0.934, and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of 0.953. These results indicate that the research model has a fairly good level of fit with the data analyzed. Hypothesis testing is performed using regression weights, which allows the identification of direct influences between variables in the model. To determine the significance of the relationship, several statistical criteria are used. A relationship is considered significant if the critical ratio (CR) value is > 1.96 and the p-value is < 0.05 at a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$). Conversely, if the CR value is < 1.96 and the p-value is > 0.05, then the exogenous variable does not have a significant effect on the endogenous variable. In addition, if the analysis results show a (***) three-star sign on the p-value, it means that the value is very small, namely < 0.001, which indicates a very high level of significance (Hair et al., 2019).

Hypothesis Testing Table

Hypothesis Variables	Estimate	Critical Ratio	P	Information
H1 <i>Celebrity endorsement</i> influence on brand awareness	0.659	4.796	***	Accepted
H2 <i>Brand image</i> influence on brand awareness	0.485	4,732	***	Accepted
H3 <i>Brand awareness</i> influence on buying decisions	2.6	2.118	0.034	Accepted
H4 <i>Celebrity endorsement</i> influence on buying decisions	0.707	4,792	***	Accepted
H5 <i>Brand image</i> influence on buying decisions	0.522	4.953	***	Accepted

Source: Author's data processing

Based on the results of the hypothesis test, it can be seen that celebrity endorsement has a significant influence on brand awareness. This is evidenced by the probability value *** which is smaller than 0.05, and the critical ratio (CR) value of 4.796, which meets the significance criteria, namely $CR \geq 1.96$. This finding indicates that the use of celebrities in marketing strategies can increase brand awareness among consumers. In addition, the results of the analysis also show that brand image has a significant effect on brand awareness. The probability value which is smaller than 0.05 and the CR of 4.732 confirm that a positive brand image can increase consumer awareness of the product. This indicates that the stronger the brand image that is built, the more likely consumers are to recognize and remember the brand. Furthermore, the results of the analysis show that brand awareness has a significant effect on buying decisions, as indicated by the probability value of 0.034, which is smaller than 0.05. In addition, the CR value of 2.118 has also met the significance criteria ($CR \geq 1.96$). This shows that the higher consumer awareness of a brand, the greater their chances of making a buying decision. Furthermore, the results of the analysis also revealed that celebrity endorsement has a significant direct influence on buying decisions. This is evidenced by a probability value of less than 0.05 and a CR of 4.792, indicating that the presence of celebrities in marketing can increase consumer appeal and trust in making buying decisions. Finally, the results of the analysis indicate that brand image has a significant effect on buying decisions. This is evidenced by a probability value of less than 0.05 and a CR of 4.953, which meets the significance criteria ($CR \geq 1.96$). This finding confirms that a strong brand image can increase consumer confidence in a product, thus encouraging them to make a purchase. Overall, the results of this study confirm that celebrity endorsement and brand image play an important role in increasing brand awareness, which ultimately influences consumer buying decisions.

Furthermore, testing of the mediation hypothesis in this study was carried out by following the procedure developed by Baron & Kenny, (1986). This procedure is used to determine whether a mediating variable plays a role in bridging the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. In addition, to ensure the level of significance of the mediation effect that occurs, a two-tailed significance test (TTS) is carried out.

Hypothesis Variables	Hypothesis Testing Table Mediation						Information
	Direct Effects	TTS	Indirect Effects	TTS	Total Effects	TTS	
H6 <i>Celebrity endorsement</i> influence on buying decisions through Brand Awareness	.524***	.001	.154***	.019	.679** *	.001	Accepted
H7 <i>Brand image</i> influence on buying decisions through Brand Awareness	.359***	.001	.095***	.013	.453** *	.001	Accepted

Source: Author's data processing. TTS: Two Tailed Significance

Hypothesis H6 tests the effect of celebrity endorsement on buying decision with brand awareness as a mediating variable. The results of the analysis show that celebrity endorsement has a significant direct effect on Buying Decision with a coefficient of 0.524 and a p value = 0.001 ($p < 0.05$). The indirect effect through brand awareness is also significant, with a coefficient of 0.154 and a p value = 0.019. Overall, the total effect reaches 0.679 with a p value = 0.001, indicating that brand awareness acts as a partial mediator. This means that even though celebrity endorsement has a direct impact on buying decision, increasing brand awareness still strengthens the effect. Hypothesis H7 tests how brand image influences buying

decision with brand awareness as a mediating variable. The results of the analysis show that brand image has a significant direct influence on buying decision with a coefficient of 0.359 and a p value = 0.001. The indirect influence through brand awareness is also significant, with a coefficient of 0.095 and a p value = 0.013. The total effect produced is 0.453 with a p value = 0.001, indicating that brand awareness plays a role as a partial mediator. Thus, although brand image directly influences buying decision, brand awareness remains a factor that strengthens the impact.

4. Conclusion

This study confirms that celebrity endorsement and brand image have a significant influence on purchasing decisions, both directly and through the mediation of brand awareness. Marketing strategies involving public figures have been proven to increase consumer visibility and interest in the Scarlett brand. On the other hand, a strong brand image provides assurance of quality and trust which are important considerations in making purchasing decisions. This finding shows that both variables not only play an independent role, but also complement each other in strengthening the appeal of the product in the eyes of consumers. From the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) perspective, the results of this study confirm that consumer behavior is not only driven by rational considerations such as price or product features, but also by symbolic values and social identities associated with brands and the celebrities who represent them. (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Consumers tend to choose products that not only fulfill functional needs, but also represent lifestyle, aspirations, and emotional attachments. (McCracken, 1986). In this context, celebrity endorsement acts as a medium for transferring meaning that strengthens the relationship between consumers and brands through the cultural narrative attached to the public figure used. (Peñaloza & Gilly, 1999). Thus, the practical implication of this study is the importance of companies, especially local brands such as Scarlett, to design marketing strategies based on cultural and symbolic values. The use of celebrities should not be done carelessly, but must consider the harmony of the image between the figure and the brand. (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). In addition, building an authentic brand image and strengthening brand awareness through social media is a strategic step to build loyalty and encourage sustainable purchasing decisions. (Mashudi et al., 2023). This research also opens up space for further studies that explore the role of other cultural elements in influencing the dynamics of the relationship between brands and consumers.

Suggestion

Based on the results of this study, companies are advised to be more selective in choosing celebrities to be endorsers, by considering the suitability between the celebrity's image and the values that the brand wants to build. Consistency between the message conveyed by the endorser and the characteristics of the target market will strengthen the effectiveness of the brand's communication strategy and increase the potential for creating emotional attachment to consumers. In addition, efforts to build and maintain a positive brand image need to be carried out continuously, not only through promotions, but also through authentic and valuable consumer experiences. Strong interactions on social media, responsive customer service, and consistent product quality are supporting factors in forming deep consumer perceptions of the brand. This study also suggests that companies integrate a culture-based approach into their marketing strategy, as advocated by Consumer Culture Theory. In this case, understanding consumers' cultural values, social aspirations, and symbolic preferences is key to building meaningful brand relationships. For further research, it is suggested to explore other variables that may strengthen the relationship between celebrity endorsement, brand image, and purchasing decisions, such as brand trust, e-WOM, or consumer digital engagement.

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