ENDORSER CREDIBILITY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE PURCHASE INTENTION OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES CONSUMER: A MEDIATING ROLE OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS SNS ADVERTISING

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Abstract- Advertising becomes important for the companies to promote their products to the customers. The evolution of technology has made many companies to shift from traditional advertising medium to new medium such as Internet as their advertising channel. Social networking sites (SNS) advertising become one of the most popular advertising in Internet due to increasing numbers of SNS users in Malaysia. However, Malaysia businesses were found to be not having a clear strategy of SNS advertising and do not recognize the impacts to their businesses. This study examined one of the strategies that has been used in SNS advertising which is the influence of endorser credibility and online purchase intention of SNS consumers in Malaysia. The endorser credibility model was developed by Ohanion (1991) and Affect Transfer Hypothesis (ATH) has been used in this study. The study carried out in Klang Valley using 200 respondents. Three elements were used to measure the endorser credibility, which are, attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness. To examine the relationship, this paper employs an SPSS test that is capable of testing the relationship between the variables. The findings from this study showed that a credible endorser leads the consumers to have an online purchase intention. Other than that, this study proved that attitudes towards SNS advertising mediates the relationship between endorser credibility and online purchase intention. Overall, the study provides supportive evidence on the impact of using endorser in SNS advertising and the results help businesses to formulate better strategy in advertising.

Keywords- Social Networking Sites Advertising; Endorser Credibility; and Online Purchase Intention.

I. INTRODUCTION

Promotional function is pertinent for many companies to promote their products. [20] This acknowledged five types of promotional tools which includes advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations and also direct marketing [16].

Advertising is one of the important tools that have been continuously used to influence and encourage consumers to take some action. Advertising are usually paid by the sponsors and disseminated through conventional media; such as newspaper, magazines, television, radio, outdoor or direct mail. Advertising through new media are information about products or organizations disseminated via internet commonly known as internet advertising (e.g. blogs, websites) or technological devices (mobile phones).

Advertising using traditional media has long served as an important source for marketers to convey information about their company and products.

However, the introduction of the Internet followed by the rapid growth rate of technology over the past decade has changed the overall consumer landscape which forces marketers to adapt their advertising to meet a more demanding and tech-wise consumer crowd. Thus, online advertising has seen a dramatic increase.

Past studies tend to focus on the effectiveness of using celebrity endorser in conventional advertising such as television. Recently,businesses have focused more on trending techniques to compete with their business rivals and to be more attractive to promoting their products. This method is through the adoption of the interactive new media technology [5].

The numbers of advertising in the media also become increasing and countless. A consumer is exposed to more than 3000 advertising in new media in a typical week [31]. This situation becomes critical for the marketers and advertisers to come out with the best ideas to gain more attention from the viewers.

The slow economic growth of the country in 2012 saw firms decreased their advertising spending on conventional media, but advertising spending on new media has shown an increase by 12.1 % [27]. This shows that companies are bold enough to put their advertising budget on new media or internet. The reason for this is that many consumers can be found on the internet. Statistics shows that internet users are increasing everywhere in the world [34]. Based on these current scenarios, it is justifiable for marketers to increase their spending on internet advertising to grab their share of customers.

It was revealed by [35] that there are about 63.6% out of Malaysia's population use the internet and about 64.7% from the internet users are from the age of 15 and older [27]. Social networking site (SNS) nowadays is one of the Internet sites that are popular among internet users. SNS such as Facebook and

Twitter are places where people can get in touch with their friends or people with the same interest [9]. Surveys done by [35] showed 85.7% out of all Internet users in Malaysia use Internet to socialize with their friends via SNS.

However, there is by all accounts an absence of under-standing and information on buyers' attitudes towards internet shopping. Little is thought about consumer attitudes toward adopting this new shopping channel and variables that impact their attitude towards it [40]. This is particularly valid with regards to Malaysian customers. Therefore, this study aims to inspect current consumers of internet shopping in Malaysia with the goal of exploring the credibility of the endorsers that will affect the intention to purchase.

1.1. Social Networking Site Advertising

Social networking is a relatively new phenomenon that has recently experienced exponential growth since 2005 in Malaysia [35]. People who shared the same interest will connect with each other through SNS sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter which provide Facebook Ads, Insta Ads and Twitter Ads. Nowadays, social networking become “advertisers’ paradise” where users could be selected according to their age, gender, taste, habits and so on [11]. It has been proven that online user spend more time in SNS than other sites [27].

Nowadays, one of the most popular methods that have been practiced since many years ago to make an advertisement attractive is the concept of endorser credibility [29]. Endorsers in source credibility become one of the most important stimuli that have been used by marketers to build consumer's attitude and leads to purchase intention. Research by [37] showed with the used of endorser in advertising increase the product sales of the company especially when the endorser is celebrities who already have a reputation in specific fields. Typically, endorser consists of four types which are celebrity, CEO, experts and typical consumer. Each speaks to different types of audiences.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Endorser can be anyone such as celebrities, athletes, politicians, professional workers or any other individual who are expert in the specific field to represent the products. Celebrity endorser will be chosen in this context of study. Celebrity endorser refers to a well-known personality who enjoys being recognized by a large share of certain group of people [23] which believed may increase brand awareness [16]. In selecting a celebrity to endorse a product, marketers tend to focus on the credibility of the celebrity. [28] defined endorser credibility as the degree to which they are considered believable. [25] mentioned source credibility model developed by [15] consists of expertise and trustworthiness as the characteristics of source, and attractiveness model which focuses on the character of attractiveness. In order to create consumer attitude that can lead to purchase intention, both model had been used together. These dimensions also supported by [28] and developed a multi-dimensional explanatory model to explain about source credibility, which received extensive validation worldwide and the model consist ofthree main dimensionswhich are attractiveness,expertise

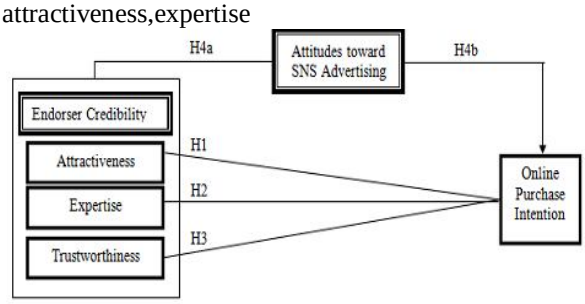


Figure 1.1: Proposed Research Framework

and trustworthiness. Studied by [16] also supported endorser credibility consists of these three dimensions.

2.1. Attractiveness

Attractiveness refers to the endorser characteristics that may attract the targeted audience through physical look, personality properties and attractive lifestyle [23] as suggested by [28]. [25] defined attractiveness as the physical appearance and/or the perceived personality of the source. In today's advertisement either traditional or internet advertisement, advertisers always choose celebrities who are physically attractive. Previous research shows that the attractiveness of the endorser is considered as key component of source credibility [24] as it is a source of likeability which refer to physical habit or behavior [13].

2.2 Expertise

Expertise can be defined as the perceived quality of an endorser to make or provide valid assertions [23].There are arguments saying that expertise is more persuasive than attractiveness and trustworthiness in influencing purchase intention among target audience ([29]; [23]). [23] also mentioned that the subjects exposed to a source perceived by highly expert exhibit more agreement with the source's recommendation than by a source with low expertise. The level of perceived celebrity expertise should predict celebrity endorser effectiveness.

2.3 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of advertising endorser is one of the important factors to obtain the customer purchase intention. [28] stated that the degree of confidence in the source's intent to communicate valid assertions is defined by trustworthiness. It refers to the honesty,

integrity, and believability of an endorser [23] which also the source of credibility of meassage in marketing [14].

A study conducted by [38], shows that there are relationship between source trustworthiness that affects consumers' behavioural intention. The previous research stated that trustworthiness is a manifesting attribute underlying source credibility that affects attitudinal change in consumers [34].

Previous study show that purchase intention can be done by using celebrity endorser credibility ([28]; [7]; [25]). In another study, [41] found that expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness were important to predict purchase intention in United States and Korea. The research framework for the current study attempts to show the relationship between endorser credibility and its effects on online purchase intention. From the research framework, we can see that the dependent variable is online purchase intention and the independent variables are endorser credibility. The endorser credibility will directlyinfluence the online purchase intention with attitude towards SNS advertising become as mediating variable.Studied by [2];[33];15] and [37] revealed that by using celebrity endorser as the focus of promotion, can give a lot of benefits in term of brand identification, change the negative impression, reposition the existing brand, global marketing that can affect the purchase intention, and could increase product sales.

Therefore, the following hypotheseswere developed:

H1: Attractiveness positively related to online purchase intention

H2: Expertise positively related to online purchase intention.

H3: Trustworthiness positively related to online purchase intention

H4: Attitudes toward SNS advertising mediates the relationship between endorser credibility and online purchase intention.

2.4 Online Purchase Intention

Customers' intention to purchase online allows for determining consumers' intention to undertake a purchasing behavior specific to internet ([30];[42]). Purchase intention can be classified as one of the components of consumer cognitive behavior on how an individual intends to buy a product [21]. For this study, the intention to purchase that triggered consumers when they are engaged in SNS activities either through the web or in online store can be considered as online purchase intention.

Since online shopping is becoming increasingly popular, it is important to understand the online shopping behavior mindset in order to explore the determinants of customer online purchase intention [36]. Consumer gain more control from the Internet in terms of accessibility on the information of the products or services such as when, where, what, and how much commercial content they wish to view. Thus, understanding online purchase behavior may allow web retailers focus on the factors that enhance the chance of purchase by customers [36].

2.5 Attitude toward Social Networking Sites Advertising

Understanding users' perceptions and acceptance can be made through study on their attitude on advertising message because attitudes are most of the time consistent and stable and integrate three parts: affect or positive and negative feelings, cognitions or knowledge, and behavioral intentions [3] ; [10].This means that consumers when exposed to SNSs advertising have the choice to fully, partially or totally accept or decline the information disseminated to them.

[7] found that positive attitude towards SNSs advertising enable consumers to more likely recall the brand names. SNSs advertising were also an advantaged which provided privacy of purchase. Overall, when consumers hold positive attitude towards the SNSs advertising, they will form a positive attitude towards the brand.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study used descriptive research design. In essence, the study was to make specific predictions on the relationships between endorser credibility and online purchase intention. The SNS advertisementswere used as an object of the study.

The study was conducted in Klang Valley area where the respondents were from the district of Bangi, Putrajaya, Serdang and Kuala Lumpur. 200 respondents were selected randomly in Klang Valley who used SNS such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WeChat and etc.,with no condition either they experienced in purchasing online products or not. Since there is no data that provides a list of individual who used the SNS, this study used a data from [35] that stated about 36.5% out of all SNS users in Malaysia reside in Klang Valley.

The study used non-probability sampling. Judgmental sampling was used because the researchers selected the respondents who suit the sampling criteria of the study. For this study, the researchers used the quantitative approach where the questionnaire was used and developed by incorporating many establishments. The questionnaires were divided into three major sections and use nominal and interval scales.

After the major data collection, the raw data was manually keyed in through SPSS version 20.0 in order to conducted statistical analysis. First, the reliability of the questionnaire survey was tested to check whether the items meet the research objectives. Second, descriptive statistics, such as frequencies were performed to understand the characteristics of the data. And lastly, the hypothesis was tested using the linear regression analysis.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1Reliability analysis

The average alpha values for variables for every section are shown in Table 1.1.

For attractiveness, the overall Cronbach's Alpha is 0.842 or 84.2 percent, with the highest value of was 0.870 while the lowest was 0.783. For expertise, the Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.879 or 87.9 percent, and the Cronbach's Alpha for every item ranged between 0.839 to 0.866. For trustworthiness, the overall Cronbach's Alpha is 0.918 or 91.8 percent, with the highest value of was 0.909 while the lowest was 0.897. For attitude toward SNS advertising, the Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.736 or 73.6 percent, and theCronbach's Alpha for every item ranged between 0.683 to 0.781.

The last section which represents online purchase intention, the Cronbach's Alpha is 0.896 or 89.6 percent. The Cronbach's Alpha for every item ranged between the values of 0.856 to 0.878. As conclusion, in general, the Cronbach's Alpha values were good for all sections with the Cronbach's Alpha value 0.751 or 75.1 percent.

Table 1.1: Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Attractiveness	0.842
Expertise	0.879
Trustworthiness	0.918
Attitude toward SNS Advertising	0.736
Online Purchase Intention	0.896

Source: Survey

4.2Attractiveness positively related to online purchase intention

Table 1.2 to 1.4 shows the results of regression analysis. The model summary table (table 1.3) shows that the value of R^2 is 0.104. This means that 10.4% of the variance in the dependent variable (online purchase intention) can be explained by the independent variable (attractiveness). In addition, based on the ANOVA table (table 1.4), the regression result (F-value = 22.885, p-value = 0.000) can be conclude that the regression fit is good. Based on the coefficients results (table 1.5), attractiveness is significant (t-value = 4.784, p-value = 0.000).

Table 1.2: Model summary b-regression between attractiveness and online purchase intention

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.322[a]	.104	.099	.68877

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attractiveness

Table 1.3: ANOVA b-regression between attractiveness and online purchase intention

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.857	1	10.857	22.885	.000[b]
	Residual	93.931	198	.474		
	Total	104.787	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Online Purchase Intention
b. Predictors: (Constant), Attractiveness

Table 1.4: Coefficients b-regression between attractiveness and online purchase intention

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.169	.285		7.621	.000
	Attractiveness	.355	.074	.322	4.784	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Online Purchase Intention

4.3 Expertise positively related to online purchase intention

Table 1.5 to 1.7 shows the results of regression analysis. The model summary table (table 1.6) shows that the value of R^2 is 0.038.This means that 3.8% of the variance in the dependent variable (online purchase intention) can be explained by the independent variable (expertise). In addition, based on the ANOVA table (table 1.7), the regression result (F-value = 7.920, p-value = 0.005) can be conclude that the regression fit is good. Based on the coefficients results (table 1.8), expertise is significant (t-value = 2.814, p-value = 0.005).

Table 1.5: Model summary b-regression between expertise and online purchase intention

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.196[a]	.038	.034	.71335

a. Predictors: (Constant), Expertise

Table 1.6: ANOVA b-regression between expertise and online purchase intention

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.030	1	4.030	7.920	.005[b]
	Residual	100.757	198	.509		
	Total	104.787	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Online Purchase Intention
b. Predictors: (Constant), Expertise

Table 1.7: Coefficients b-regression between expertise and online purchase intention

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.702	.292		9.256	.000
	Expertise	.226	.080	.196	2.814	.005

a. Dependent Variable: Online Purchase Intention

4.4 Trustworthiness positively related to online purchase intention

Table 1.8 to 1.10 shows the results of regression analysis. The model summary table (table 1.9) shows that the value of R^2 is 0.066. This means that 6.6% of the variance in the dependent variable (online purchase intention) can be explained by the independent variable (trustworthiness). In addition, based on the ANOVA table (table 1.10), the regression result (F-value = 13.943, p-value = 0.000) can be conclude that the regression fit is good. Based on the coefficients results (table 1.11), trustworthiness is significant (t-value = 3.734, p-value = 0.000).

Table 1.8: Model summary b-regression between trustworthiness and online purchase intention

Model	*R*	*R Square*	*Adjusted R Square*	*Std. Error of the Estimate*
1	.256[a]	.066	.061	.70314

a. Predictors: (Constant), Trustworthiness

Table 1.9: ANOVA b-regression between trustworthiness and online purchase intention

Model		*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
1	Regression	6.894	1	6.894	13.943	.000[b]
	Residual	97.893	198	.494		
	Total	104.787	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Online Purchase Intention
b. Predictors: (Constant), Trustworthiness

Table 1.10: Coefficients b-regression between trustworthiness and online purchase intention

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	*Std. Error*	*Beta*		
1	(Constant)	2.659	.234		11.389	.000
	Trustworthiness	.241	.065	.256	3.734	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Online Purchase Intention

4.5 Attitude toward SNS advertising mediates the relationship between endorser credibility and online purchase intention

Table 1.11 shows the result of hierarchical mediated regression analysis. In order to test for the mediation effect of attitude toward SNS advertising between endorser credibility and online purchase intention, SOBEL's Test was performed. Based on the test results, it can be conclude that Attitude toward SNS advertising mediates the relationship between endorser credibility and online purchase intention (SOBEL's Test t-value = 2.8881, p-value = 0.004). On further analysis of the direct effect of endorser credibility on online purchase intention, it can be concluded there is direct effect (t-value = 4.445, p-value = 0.000), and therefore attitude toward SNS advertising is a partial mediator.

Table 1.11 Mediated Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Regression	*Formula*	R^2	*Beta*	*t-value*	*Sig*	*F*	*Conclusion*
Endorser credibility and attitude towards SNSs advertising	$M_e=\beta_{20}+\beta_{21}X+\varepsilon_2$ β_{21} is significant	0.134	0.367	5.545	0.000	30.742	Significant
Endorser credibility and online purchase intention	$Y=\beta_{10}+\beta_{11}X+\varepsilon_1$ β_{11} is significant	0.091	0.301	4.445	0.000	19.757	Significant
Attitude toward SNSs advertising and online purchase intention	$Y=\beta_{10}+\beta_{11}X+\varepsilon_1$ β_{11} is significant	0.101	0.072	4.721	0.000	22.285	Significant
Endorser credibility and attitude toward SNSs advertising with online purchase intention	$Y=\beta_{30}+\beta_{31}X+\beta_{32}M_e+\varepsilon_3$ β_{32} is significant	0.141	0.213 0.240	3.004 3.379	0.003 0.001	16.107	Significant (partial mediation)

V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was to identify the relationship between endorser credibility and online purchase intention among social networking sites users in Malaysia. It was a hypothesis testing study and data from 200 respondents were collected through a standardized questionnaire distributed to respondents in Klang Valley area.

Endorser credibility that holds three dimensions which are attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness, can be concluded to be significantly linked to online purchase intention in this study. Even though the impact is low, because of the low R squared value, it can be concluded that credible source of endorser that employs three dimensions as mentioned earlier in SNS advertising will make the online consumers have the high purchase intention. This finding is in line with the previous studies especially in traditional media as discussed much earlier.

In addition, the regression analysis used in this study were able to support the hypothesis developed as discussed. The results provide insights into how the whole conceptual framework would provide support for online advertising. This study indicates that businesses that had used endorser in their social networking site advertising tend to have higher online purchase intention from the consumers.

In term of managerial implications, it can be concluded that the relationship among these variables can be used to plan a future advertising campaign for a particular brand. In order to attract the attention of online users, the advertising must use a credible endorser. This is because credible endorsers carry different values that may add to the advertising

campaign and attract the online consumers to view the advertising.

VI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study is limited to the demographic scope within Klang valley only, mainly due to financial and time constraints. The location of the study might not represent the total of Malaysian population even though Klang valley has recorded as the highest usage of social networking sites in Malaysia. Hence, the non-probability sampling techniques used for this study, in which the researchers cannot estimate the error and biases that occurred in the study. Therefore, this affect the generalizability of the findings and conclusions.

From the previous analysis, it appears that some areas need further research in the future. Beside of the location factor, it is suggested that future research could also be done on other variables, such as corporate credibility, rather than solely focus on endorser credibility, in order to determine the direct or indirect influence on the online purchase intention such as corporate credibility to build trusts among viewers.

To be more accurate, it is also recommended that future research use different sampling process such as probability sampling. Even though the time and cost for this type of sampling are high, but the results will be more accurate to represent their attitudes. In addition, different data collection methods that are qualitative in nature could be applied in future studies in order to obtain more detailed results.

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