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Abstract

The rapid spread of social media has brought new ways for marketers to communicate and manage brands online. Celebrity endorsement has been a popular practice in social media, however, what contributes to its effectiveness has not been fully understood. To address this issue, this study examines the effects of endorsement in social media towards brand attitude and merchandise attractiveness based on the source credibility model. We propose source credibility elements: attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness, to be positively related to consumer attitude. We test these hypotheses by conducting online survey with 183 participants in Indonesia. This study demonstrated that brand attitude was influenced by endorser's attractiveness and trustworthiness, meanwhile merchandise attractiveness was influenced by endorser's expertise and trustworthiness.

Keywords: social commerce, endorsement, source credibility model, brand attitude, merchandise attractiveness.

1   INTRODUCTION

The rapid spread of social media has brought new ways for marketers to communicate and manage brands online. Social media has become the new communications paradigm for company-to-consumer message delivery (Mangold & Faulds 2009). In emerging markets, in particular, social media provides a conducive platform for e-commerce with its readily-available features and easy-to-use functionalities, enabling business owners with limited technology expertise and resources to quick establish their business. E-commerce conducted on the social platform, or social commerce, has become the "new norm" in emerging countries such as Indonesia (Redwing Asia 2013).

Social media presents both new opportunities and challenges as it changes the dynamics of the audience-media relationship from the traditional un-interactive, unreciprocal, and highly controlled one to a more interactive and reciprocal one (Chung & Cho 2014). Celebrity endorsement has been a popular practice in traditional media and social media alike, however, what contributes to its effectiveness has not been fully understood in social media.

Prior research has found using celebrity endorser on advertising has positive effects on consumer's attitude towards the ad, brand, and intent to purchase (Silvera & Austad 2004; Ferle & Choi 2005; Amos et al. 2008; Chang et al. 2012). Unfortunately, most of prior studies were conducted on traditional media such as campaign, magazine or TV, with only a few exceptions targeted on social media (e.g. Zhu & Tan 2007). In traditional media, the communication is one way, it is often costly, permanent, and tangible, however, hard to measure the results. Whereas in social media, the communication is two-way, customers can talk directly to one another, part of the contents are user generated, it is often relatively inexpensive, measureable, and disseminate rapidly (Adweek 2016; Colliander & Dahlen 2011; Mangold & Faulds 2009). Given the differences between social media and traditional media, there may be different results when we apply the findings from prior research. Therefore, for brand managers seeking a suitable endorser on social media, many questions remain unanswered. For example, what type of endorsers should they pick for enhancing brand attitude in social media such as Facebook or Instagram? What types of endorsers work best to add to product attractiveness in social media? To fill this gap, this present study explore the effectiveness of endorsement on social commerce towards two outcome measures: brand attitude and merchandise attractiveness. We investigate three characteristics of the endorser: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, and their effects on brand attitude and merchandise attractiveness in one popular social media platform, Instagram, in an emerging economy: Indonesia. Indonesia is a country that reportedly has an exceptionally social culture and ranked by WebIndex as one of the global leaders in social media engagement (Redwing Asia 2013).

2   SOCIAL COMMERCE IN INDONESIA

Indonesia has a population of 253 million, making it the 4th largest country population wise in the world. The internet penetration in Indonesia's urban areas reached 24.23% in 2012 according to Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII 2014). Statistics showed that around 65% of Indonesian Internet users get connected to the Internet through mobile phones and make accessing internet using mobile devices a daily habit (APJII 2014).

APJII reports that 87.8% Indonesia's Internet user use some kind of social networks. Indonesians exhibited high willingness (compared with 78% of online shoppers) to share their purchases and to recommend products on social media sites via photo-messaging, tweeting or blog posts. Moreover, Tech in Asia reported that Indonesian Internet users prefer to do online shopping via quite different channels than the traditional online shopping sites: preference for shopping through messenger group is at 27%, through online forum or classified sites is at 26.6%, through social media site is at 26.4%

compared with the conventional online shopping site at 20% (Tech in Asia 2013). Digital media especially social network has taken over the traditional business.

One of the most popular social media to conduct social commerce is Instagram. Paul Webster, Brand Development from Instagram observed that Indonesia is one of the country with the biggest users of Instagram. Eighty nine percent of Indonesia Instagram users are aged between 18-34, and access Instagram at least once a week. There are two reasons why Instagram has become popular for social commerce. First, Instagram is easy to use and manage. The easiness of application attracted small entrepreneurs to start their business on Instagram while reduce cost such as rent for physical store and web design. Second, the user based for social media in Indonesia is relatively well-off and active. According to We Are Social, 32% of social media users have Instagram account, 74% of mobile users installed social media apps on their phones, and 57% made an online purchase through mobile phone (Tradegecko 2015). 62.3% Instagram users in Indonesia has been active users for 1 to 3 years. 74.9% of these users have made purchases from social commerce accounts on Instagram. Taylor Nelson Sofres Indonesia, an international research firm, revealed that majority of Indonesian Instagrammers are young, mobile-first community, stable in financial, and well-educated. Sixty nine percent Instagrammers have college degree and with income 1.5 times higher than the general smartphone users who do not have Instagram. Active users of Instagram in Indonesia are mostly between 18-34 years (89%), with around 63% of total users being female (Tempo Indonesia 2016).

3   CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Advertising is persuasion. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) argues that there are two routes of persuasion: central and peripheral routes (Petty et al. 1983). The Central route is a high involvement one, which leads audience to put careful and thoughtful consideration of the true merits of the content of message, whereas the peripheral route is relatively low involvement, which triggers audience to concern on cues, either positive or negative in the stimulus or making a simple inference about message content (Petty & Cacioppo 1986; Jones et al. 2003; Pornpitakpan 2004). Such cues may include factors such as the attractiveness of the presenter, how trustworthy he/she looks, or the perceived expertise of the presenter.

Advertising is most often processed as a low-involvement communication (Sengupta et al. 1997), and for advertisement and endorsement on Instagram, it is particularly so, as it has quite limited space for text messages, thereby limiting available contents for processing. Based on these observations, we adopt the source credibility model, a model depicting peripheral route persuasion to examine the endorsement effectiveness.

Source credibility is a term used to present positive characteristics possessed by source of message to persuade the audience (Hovland et al. 1953; Ohanian 1990; Petty & Cacioppo 1986; Sterntshal et al. 1978). Combining both the source credibility model and the source attractiveness model, Ohanian (1990) proposed three dimensions to measure credibility of the spokesperson: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness and reported that these three characteristics of the endorser are positively related to the intention to purchase and perception of quality for the products. Source credibility has widely used on psychology, marketing, advertising, social science, and many field areas with results that indicate the credibility of the speaker is positively related to the audience responses (Fisher et al. 1979; Arora 2000; McComas & Trumbo 2001; Tormala & Petty 2004; Sparks & Rapp 2011; Li et al. 2015). We use source credibility model as our theoretical basis to examine how the three characteristics of the endorser: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness are related to the effectiveness of endorsement on social media.

On social media, the endorsers post the endorsed product on his/her personal social media and write positive reviews about the product. Compared with endorsement on traditional media, while a TV

commercial or billboard can be easily identified as a staged production, utilizing the endorsers actual social channels creates a unique and personal allure to followers. Therefore, brands see social media as the most effective way to engage with people, especially the younger generation, as it is the method by which younger demographics tend to interact with each other, and everything around them (Social Media Weekly 2015).

Based on the source credibility model, we propose the following model as a framework to investigate how the characteristics of the endorser on social media affect the effects of persuasion. Specifically, we examine two attitude outcomes central to brand management: brand attitude, and merchandise attractiveness. Following prior endorsement literature, brand attitude and merchandise attractiveness were used to express effectiveness of persuasive media such as advertising or endorsement (Colliander & Dahlen 2011; Till & Busler 2000; Tzoumaka et.al 2014).
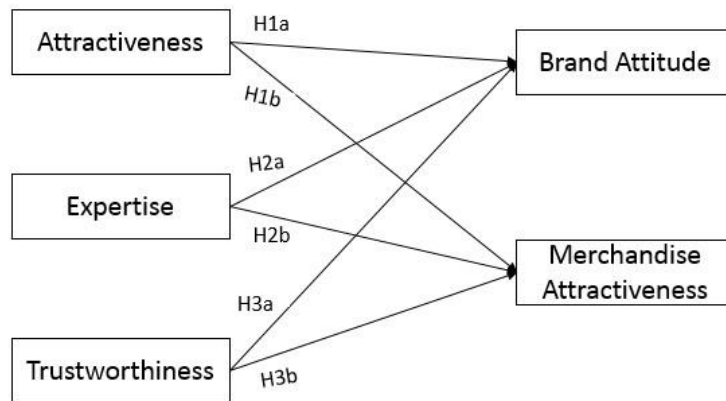

Figure 1.   Conceptual Model

4   HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Ohanian (1990) proposed three dimensions to the credibility of the spokesperson: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness and argue that in a low involvement situation, these three factors are effective predictors of persuasion. Attractiveness of source is closely related to endorser's appearance that could enhance persuasion based on likeability, similarity, or desirability to target audience. Considerable research in advertising and communication has found that physical attractiveness is an important cue in an individual's initial judgment of another person (Ohanian 1990). Felix and Borges (2014) revealed visual attention is related to perception of celebrity endorser attractiveness, attitude toward the ad and brand evaluation. Attractiveness or likeability also give stronger impact on persuasive message's Implicit Association Test (Smith & Houwer 2014). Joseph (1982) reported positive effects of physically attractive communicators' impact on opinion change, product evaluation, and other dependent measures via a meta-analysis. Similarly, Eagly et al. (1991) conducted a meta-analysis of 76 studies and reported that in general, physically attractive people are viewed more favorably on a variety of personality traits such as social competence, intellectual competence, concern for others and integrity. This is because in the peripheral route people are prone to thought based on heuristics and shortcuts to establish an attitude, and are susceptible to cues. Given that attractive people are imbued with positive traits such as intelligent, integral and concern for others, people are likely to infer that if this attractive, intelligent and integral person is endorsing this product and brand, it has to be good. Therefore, we propose:

H1a: Endorser's attractiveness is positively related to the consumer's brand attitude

H1b: Endorser's attractiveness is positively related to the consumer's perceived merchandise attractiveness.

Expertise refers to perceived knowledge possessed by spokesperson to making correct assertions. Research shows that people often rely on source expertise when forming attitude (see Bohner et al. 2002, for an overview), particularly in situations where people are either not motivated or able to analyze a message (Bohner et al. 1995). Expertise also influence customer's decision-making processes based on their perceived credibility, whereas endorser was perceived possess requisite skill, competency, skill, and knowledge regarding the endorsed product (Chang et.al 2012). Empirical evidence confirmed that the audience who have restricted capacity to process information typically apply the expertise heuristic when they are provided with an expertise cue (Kruglanski & Thompson 1999). Similar to the attractiveness feature, expertise serve as a quick and easy to process cue, leading to the conclusion that if this person, who seems knowledgeable about this particular type of product is endorsing it, then it should be good. Thus, we have:

H2a: Endorser's expertise is positively related to the consumer's brand attitude

H2b: Endorser's expertise is positively related to the consumer's perceived merchandise attractiveness.

Trustworthiness refers to level of confidence the spokesperson had when convey the message to the audience. It is the antecedent to trust, an crucial element in online commerce, given the impersonal nature of the online environment (uncertainty), and the inability to judge product quality prior to purchase (information asymmetry) (Ba 2001). Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002) hypothesize that judgments of trust reduces exchange uncertainty and helps the consumer form consistent and reliable expectations. Trust gives consumers confidence to eliminate necessary information searching and validation, thus reducing the complexity and uncertainty of a relationship (Zhu & Chen 2012), which, in peripheral route, are strong cues that could lead to attitude change. Andaleeb (1996) posits that when the focal party trusts the source, he/she will feel secure by way of an implicit belief that the actions of the source will result in positive outcomes, therefore, obtaining positive attitudes such as brand attitude and feel that the merchandise is more attractive.

H3a: Endorser's trustworthiness is positively related to the consumer's brand attitude

H3b: Endorser's trustworthiness is positively related to the consumer's perceived merchandise attractiveness.

5 METHODOLOGY

We drew data from surveys taken by Instagram users in Indonesia. Questionnaire supported by Google Forms were handed out to users that identified as Instagram users and completed on a voluntary basis. A small gift, valued at approximate USD $11, was given as an appreciation to users who completed the survey. Total data of 220 surveys were collected; 183 out of 220 are valid. Table 1 presents the detailed sample profile. All questions in this study adopted the six-point Likert scale. All measurements for the questionnaire were drawn from previous research (see table 2 for source and items). Some wording was adapted to fit the social commerce context.

Category	%
Gender	
Male	22.40
Female	77.60
Age 17-24	
	85.8
25-34	13.7
>34	0.5
Education	
High School	30.6
College (Associate Degree)	3.3
Undergraduate	60.1
Graduate	5.5
Active	
Users > 3	
months	0.5
6 months - 1 year	18.6
1 - 3 years	62.3
> 3 years	18.6
Have ever bought products from Instagram	
Ever	74.9
Never	25.1

Table 1.   Demographic information of the respondents

6   ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

On a global scale, Business Insider (2014) reported nearly 70% user base on Instagram are female, 70% in total are from outside of USA, including Indonesia (Jakpat, 2015). Deep down on Indonesians' behavior, most of activities on Instagram by males are uploading/sharing photo (83%), looking for info/inspiration (62%), and stalking (53%). Meanwhile, females' activities on Instagram are uploading/sharing photo (90%), online shopping (60%), and looking for info/inspiration (64%). Moreover, females (79%) are more likely to follow celebrities on Instagram than males (61%) (Jakpat, 2015). We can see females do like online shopping. From demographic data sample, females (77.6%) are dominated than males (22.4%). Thus, it explains why most of participants on our data sample are female.

Table 2 summarizes the measurement items, source, item loadings, composite reliability, and AVE for the constructs in our model. Table 3 reports the correlation matrix of our constructs. We tested our hypotheses with partial least squares (PLS) technique. The results of the PLS analysis were presented in Figure 2 below.

Latent variable/source	Scale Items	Outer loading	Composite reliability	AVE
Attractiveness (Ohanian 1990)	Attractive – Unattractive Classy – Not Classy Elegant – Plain Beautiful – Ugly Sexy – Not Sexy	0.8102 0.8566 0.7958 0.8943 0.6524	0.9018	0.6498
Expertise (Ohanian 1990)	Expert – Not an Expert Experienced – Inexperienced Knowledgeable – Unknowledgeable Qualified – Unqualified Skilled – Unskilled	0.8734 0.7867 0.8789 0.8626 0.8469	0.9288	0.7231
Trustworthiness (Ohanian 1990)	Dependable – Undependable Honest – Dishonest Reliable – Unreliable Sincere – Insincere Trustworthy – Untrustworthy	0.8401 0.8373 0.8788 0.8447 0.7549	0.9182	0.6925
Merchandise Attractiveness (Verhagen 2011)	Uninteresting offers – interesting offers Bad alignment with my interests – good alignment with my interests	0.9186 0.9083	0.9097	0.8344
Attitude toward the brand (Spears & Singh 2004; Li et al. 2002)	Unappealing/appealing Bad/good Unpleasant/pleasant Unfavorable/favorable Unlikable/likable Boring/interesting Unattractive/attractive	0.7063 0.8469 0.8320 0.8675 0.8352 0.8521 0.8851	0.9409	0.6954

Table 2.   Measurement items, source, loading, reliability, and AVE

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
Attractiveness	*1*				
Brand Attitude	0.4745	*1*			
Expertise	0.5456	0.5067	*1*		
Merchandise Attractiveness	0.2514	0.6739	0.471	*1*	
Trustworthiness	0.5089	0.5557	0.8112	0.469	*1*

Table 3. Latent variable correlation matrix table (Note: Diagonal elements in italics are square roots of AVE)
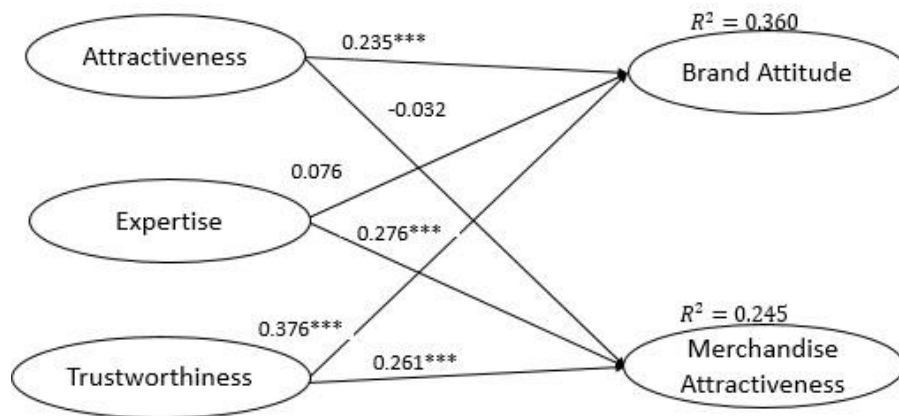
*Figure 2.   Summary of PLS results (**Notes: ***Significance at p<0.00 levels**)*

The results show that attractiveness and trustworthiness significantly influence attitude towards brand, therefore, *Hypotheses 1a and 3a* were supported. Expertise did not significantly influence brand attitude. Hence, *Hypothesis 2a* was not supported.

For merchandise attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness of endorser significantly influence merchandise attractiveness, thus, *Hypotheses 2b and 3b* were supported. However, attractiveness did not influence merchandise attractiveness. Hence, *Hypothesis 1b* was not supported.

7   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research proposes source credibility elements: attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness, to be positively related to consumer attitudes. The results show that brand attitude was influenced by endorser's attractiveness and trustworthiness, while endorser's expertise did not have an impact. Similarly, merchandise attractiveness was influenced by endorser's expertise and trustworthiness, but not endorser's attractiveness. How do we interpret these results? Why is expertise not related to brand attitude, and endorser's attractiveness not associated with merchandise attractiveness?

Reflecting on our results, this may be due to the cues' varying link strength with the brand/product. Sengupta et al. (1997) argues that not all cues are created equal: the cues that form a stronger link with the product should produce greater attitude change than the ones that form a weaker link, because a stronger association will result in greater cue accessibility. For brand attitude, endorser's expertise may be a weak link as endorser's expertise is likely to limited only to the certain product that he/she is endorsing, but not the various product lines a brand possibly possesses. Similarly, for merchandise attractiveness, both the endorser's expertise and trustworthiness are strong cues about the product (the endorser has expertise about this kind of product and can be trusted in his/her product recommendation), whereas the attractiveness of the endorser is only weakly linked to the product, therefore may not produce a significant result.

This result echoes with findings based on reasoning social adaptation theory (Kahle 1984; Kahle & Timmer 1983). Attractiveness of source influences attitude towards brand, while expertise helps to evaluate product feature and characteristics (Kahle & Homer 1985; Abirami & Krishnan 2015; Chan et al. 2013).

Trustworthiness is the only construct that are significantly related to both brand attitude and merchandise attractiveness, highlighting the importance of trust in social commerce. The endorsers' trustworthiness is the key when delivering an advertising or persuasive message. Indeed, trust is the

willingness of a party to be vulnerable and take risks to the actions of another party (Mayer et al. 1995). In social commerce, unlike in brick and mortar stores, consumers do not get the chance to touch and feel the product, thus, there is significant higher risks involved with social commerce. The trust derived from trustworthy endorsers is the key to counter these risk concerns and change the attitude of the audience.

The research has contributed by exploring endorsement effects on social commerce with the source credibility model, thus enriching our understanding of persuasion under the social commerce context. It helps practitioners with concrete advice on how to select proper type of endorsers based on the advertising intention. If the purpose is mainly to enhance brand attitude, managers should find endorser who are attractiveness and trustworthy. If the concern is on boosting sales and market share of a certain product, endorsers need to appear with expertise as well as trustworthy.

Several limitations of the study need to be noted. First, although we strive for representativeness of users on Instagram, our data was biased toward the young, highly educated, female population in Indonesia. Data from a more balanced, background, i.e. education, gender, and age would be preferred for better generalizability. Second, we concentrated on the effects of source credibility elements: attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness on consumer attitudes. Other important factors, such as types of brand (big brand, start-up brand), product type (search vs. experience) are not included in the model. This could be an avenue for future research.

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