# The Role of Celebrity Endorsement Perception and Self-Image Congruity on Purchase Intention of Early adulthood

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**Abstract.** Early adulthood is a transitional period towards the next developmental phase. During this period, students are subjected a process of self-discovery, characterized by a desire to appear more attractive and gain recognition from social environment. In such circumstances, individuals demonstrate a significant inclination to prioritize the allocation of financial resources away from meals and towards the purchase of items to amplify their attractiveness, recognition, and acceptance. This behavior is driven by the aspiration to align their ideal and actual self-image with the acquired products. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the influence of celebrity endorsement perception and self-image congruity on purchase intention. A quantitative approach was adopted with a sample of 344 students. The results of multiple linear regression analysis showed that celebrity endorsement perception and self-image congruity significantly influenced purchase intention, accounting for 58% of the variance.

**Keywords:** Perception of celebrity endorsement, self-image congruity, purchase intention

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## Introduction

In this modern era, with rapid development, the internet is used by people to share information, communicate, entertain, and conduct online business. Subsequently, numerous platforms have emerged to facilitate different community activities, including the purchasing process. Individuals are no longer required to physically visit stores to fulfill their essential needs. They have the convenience of using various social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, as well as e-commerce platforms to effortlessly browse and select the desired products or services (Shopee, Lazada, Bukalapak, Tokopedia, and others).

Association of Internet Service Providers (APJII) in 2022 found that over 74% of consumers prefer to shop online (Jemadu & Prastya, 2022). According to Populix (2020), online shopping is dominated by the age range of 18-21 years at 35% and 22-25 years at 33%. The age group of 18-25 years falls into the early adulthood category, known as a transitional phase from adolescence to adulthood. During this developmental phase, individuals are expected to engage in reflective thinking, which involves considering everything based on previous experiences and knowledge, guided by complex logic (Pratiwi et al., 2022).

The purchase intention serves as an important predictor of actual purchase behavior by consumers. This process is preceded by seeking information about the product, quality, evaluation, promotions, prices, experiences, knowledge, and other factors that generate purchase intention (Solihin, 2020). Furthermore, purchase intention can be observed through individual attention, as the first step in the communication process when consumers need to learn about the existence of a product or service (Song et al., 2021). The second stage is interest, which refers to an individual's internal feelings about a specific product or service (Song et al., 2021). Detailed information about a product or service can be viewed as the initial stage of capturing their attention. Subsequently, when individuals have an interest in a product or service, it can be seen as the interest phase. The phase is a psychological stage of recognition, while the level of importance is an emotional phase. Furthermore, desire is an emotion triggered by interest. Once interest is aroused, individuals will feel the desire to obtain the product or service (Song et al., 2021). In the stage of action, desire

serves as both a mediator between antecedents and behavioral intentions and a direct influencer of individuals' purchase intentions (Choi & Rifon, 2012). Intention has a stronger relationship than desire because it requires commitment and planning in the decision-making process of purchase (Song et al., 2021).

Many factors influence consumer purchase intention, one of which is the promotional activities carried out through celebrity endorsement. This endorsement involves movie and television stars, as well as popular people from the world of sports, politics, business, arts, music, the military, and other influential groups (Um & Jang, 2020). Previous studies showed that consumers experience high risks in online purchases due to the lack of real experience using a product and minimal information related to the product. Through endorsements, consumers can be facilitated in making purchase decisions (Liu et al., 2020).

The perception of celebrity endorsement can be seen through tatractiven or attractiveness. Patzer (in Gupta et al., 2017) stated that physical attractiveness is a subtle, penetrating, and inevitable information signal. The use of attractive endorsers is preferable to those who appear ordinary. This is because people strive to enhance their attractiveness and react positively to endorsers. Furthermore, there is trustworthiness as a form of integrity and credibility of the endorser (Nguyen, 2021). High credibility can represent positive product characteristics, influence message approval, and change consumer attitudes toward a product or service. The level of expertise possessed by the endorser plays a crucial role in providing information and exerting influence on consumers regarding the advertised product.

A preliminary study was conducted on 50 students regarding their purchase intentions toward products promoted through celebrity endorsement. Students were selected as subjects due to their high purchasing rate in the early adulthood category. The results showed that 68% were interested in products advertised through celebrity endorsement, while 32% were less interested. Other findings indicated that self-image congruity, consisting of actual and ideal self-image congruity, has a substantial relationship with purchase intention. Greater emotional commitment is experienced when consumers feel that the offered product aligns with their self-image (Yuanita et al., 2022). The lack of promotional context implies that it may not align with consumers' ideal aspirations, hindering ideal self-image congruity (Rabbane et al., 2020). Liu et al. (2020) found that perceived self-image congruity is crucial in forming product awareness. Therefore, celebrity endorsement is expected to show characteristics similar to their target audience (Liu et al., 2020).

Self-image congruity is related to the symbolic and social dimensions of a product's image and aims to fulfill consumer motives, such as self-esteem or social approval (Klabi, 2020). For consumers, a product has symbolic attributes that build their user image and demonstrate their appearance and behavior. To align with the expectation, individuals try to align their self-image with the product image, known as self-image congruity (Yuanita et al., 2022).

Many studies addressed this issue, examining whether congruence significantly affects consumer purchase intention. Zhu and Teng (2019) showed that the congruence between brand image, self-image, and celebrity endorsement type significantly influences consumers' attitudes toward the product. Furthermore, Liang et al. (2022) showed that the congruence between celebrity endorsement and consumers/products has a positive impact on increasing trust, desire, and motivation for purchasing behavior.

The congruence between celebrity endorsement and self-image can be a preceding factor influencing consumer perceptions. Consequently, the primary objective was to address the existing gap by integrating consumer self-image with the product and examining the congruence between celebrities and consumers. It aimed to investigate how these factors impact consumers' pre-purchase psychological states and subsequent purchasing behavior. This study focused on examining the influence of perception towards celebrity endorsements and congruity with self-image on the purchase intention of students.

## Methods

This study was conducted using a quantitative approach and multiple linear regression analysis. The objective of multiple linear regression was to model the relationship between explanatory and response variables (Zhang, et al., 2019) to determine the celebrity endorsement perception on purchase intention.

The population consisted of active students at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung closely associated with the use of social media, where celebrity endorsements were commonly used for product promotion. Additionally, they were in the transitional phase from late adolescence to early adulthood. According to data from the Higher Education Database in 2020, the total number of active students at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung was 27,766. The sampling technique employed probability with quota, taken from 9 faculties at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. Based on the Isaac and Michael table with a margin of error tolerance of 5%, the sample size determined was 344 respondents (Sugiyono, 2017).

Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. The

questionnaire consisted of four answer choices, namely Very Inappropriate (VI), Inappropriate (I), Appropriate (A), and Very Appropriate (VA). The four responses were made to avoid bias toward selecting a neutral response, as the middle category can lead to multiple interpretations.

To measure celebrity endorsement perception, the measurement tool was modified from Ohanian (1990). The tool consisted of 27 questions with three dimensions, including 1) attractiveness (e.g., "Celebrity endorsement makes me believe that the advertised product is good and worth buying"); 2) trustworthiness (e.g., "The accuracy and truthfulness of the information provided by celebrity endorsement convince me about the quality of the advertised product"); and 3) expertise (e.g., "The celebrity endorser lacks expertise in delivering information about the advertised product"). The validity values for each dimension were attractiveness (.781), trustworthiness (.721), and expertise (.845). The reliability level was highly reliable (.914).

Secondly, the self-image congruity measurement tool was modified by Sirgy (2000). It consisted of 13 statements that measured three dimensions, namely 1) actual self-image congruity (e.g., "I know exactly what kind of product suits me"); 2) ideal self-image congruity (e.g., "I want to improve my appearance through the products I use"); and 3) ideal social self-image congruity (e.g., "I am seen as stylish in social settings when I use the products I use"). The validity values for each dimension were actual self-image congruity (.614), ideal self-image congruity (.778), and ideal social self-image congruity (.851), with high reliability (.843).

Thirdly, the purchase intention measurement tool was developed based on the theory proposed by Li and Yu (2013). It consisted of 11 statements with four dimensions, namely 1) attention (e.g., "The way celebrity endorsement delivers product/service information catches my attention"); 2) interest (e.g., "I would choose products recommended by celebrity endorsement"); 3) desire (e.g., "The message conveyed by celebrity endorsement makes me want to try the product/service"); and 4) action (e.g., "I plan to purchase products recommended by celebrity endorsement shortly"). The validity values for each dimension were attention (.635), interest (.889), desire (.775), and action (.729), with high reliability (.874)

## Results and Discussion

In this study, the distribution of respondents based on gender (Figure 1) was 70.4% and 29.6% females and males. Female consumers tend to prioritize emotional motives (emotions, desires, feelings) compared to males who lean more towards rationality and logic (Pratiwi et al., 2022). Additionally, females tend to pay more attention to appearance, then it is not uncommon for them to spend more money to support their appearance by purchasing various items such as makeup, clothing, bags, and others (Dewandari & Putri, 2021).

The distribution of respondents based on age (Figure 2) showed that the majority were 21 years old (25%). Age is one of the factors that influence the decision-making process of purchasing. The age range of 20-25 years is a transitional period from late adolescence to early adulthood (Hurlock, 2011). The prevalence of 21-year-old students suggested that they often prioritize presenting themselves to gain acceptance within social settings or to attract the attention of the opposite gender. On the other hand, 24-year-old students devote their time and energy to completing final assignments and tend to exhibit a more rational approach (Pratiwi et al., 2022).

In the next stage, the data were grouped into low, medium, and high categories based on mean and standard deviation values. The largest percentage was in the medium category, with 67.7% (celebrity endorsement perception), 70.3% (self-image congruity), and 62.2% (purchase intention).
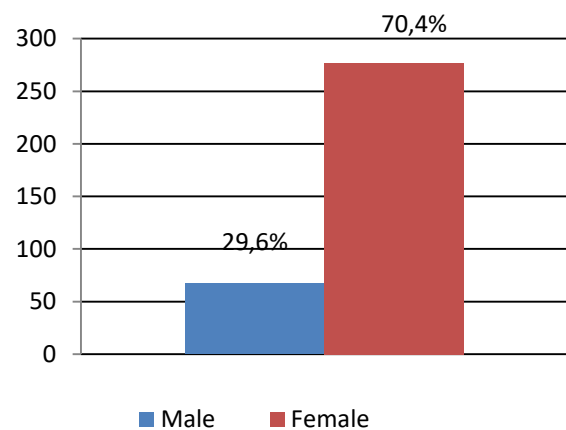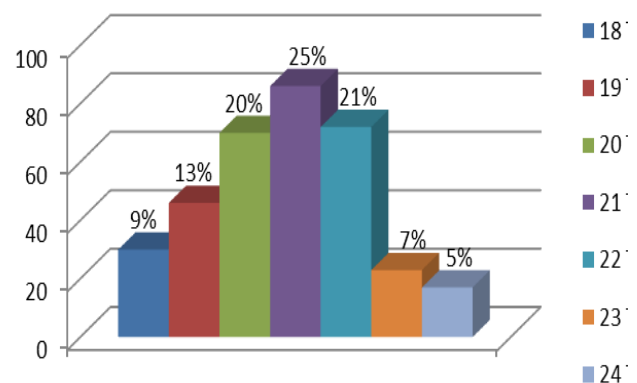
*Figure 1.* Demographic Data Based on Gender

*Figure 2.* Demographic Data Based on Age

Inferential analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression after meeting the requirements of classical assumption tests, namely normal distribution of data (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test significance value of .2 > .05), no multicollinearity symptoms (tolerance value of .798 > .10 and VIF value of 1.254 < 10), and no heteroscedasticity (significance values $X_1$ .810; $X_2$ .268 > .05).

Based on Table 1, the equation obtained is $Y = 2.508 + .277X_1 + .136X_2$. The coefficient of the constant term, 2.508, indicates a positive influence. The X variable (celebrity endorsement perception and self-image congruity) increases by one unit with Y (purchase intention) and the beta coefficient for celebrity endorsement perception ($X_1$) is .277. Furthermore, when other variables are constant and $X_1$ and purchase intention variable (Y) increase by 1% and 27.7%. The beta coefficient for self-image congruity ($X_2$) is .136, and when other variables are constant, $X_2$ and the purchase intention variable (Y) increase by 1% and 13.6%.

The Adjusted R-squared value of .58 or 58% indicates that celebrity endorsement perception ($X_1$) and self-image congruity ($X_2$) can explain 58% of the purchase intention (Y), while the remaining 42% is explained by others. The calculated F value of 237.604 > the tabulated F value of 3.022 and a significance value of < .001 < .05, indicating that celebrity endorsement perception ($X_1$) and self-image congruity ($X_2$) have a simultaneous effect on purchase intention (Y), as seen in Table 2.

For independent variables (Table 3), the calculated t-values of 17.006 and 4.528 (> t-table value of 1.967) and significance values (< .001 < .05) indicate that celebrity endorsement perception ($X_1$) and self-image congruity ($X_2$) have a partial influence on purchase intention (Y).

Table 1

*Multiple Linear Regression Equation*

| Model | | Unstandardized B | Coefficients Std. Error |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | (Constant) | 2.508 | 1.263 |
| | $X_1$ | .277 | .016 |
| | $X_2$ | .136 | .030 |

Table 2

*F Test Results*

| Model | | Sum of Aquares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Regression | 4203.579 | 2 | 2101.790 | 237.604 | < .001 |
| | Residual | 3016.409 | 341 | 8.846 | | |
| | Total | 7219.988 | 343 | | | |

Table 3

*T Test Results*

| Model | | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | (Constant) | 1.985 | .048 |
| | $X_1$ | 17.006 | < .001 |
| | $X_2$ | 4.528 | < .001 |

**Discussion**

As indicated by a moderate perception of celebrity endorsement, the majority of the student subjects are sometimes stimulated by advertisements featuring celebrity endorsers. This can be influenced by various factors such as culture, social class, reference groups, situations, family, personality, self-concept, motivation, experience, lifestyle, product quality, and price (Anas & Sudarwanto, 2020). However, some students had a more positive perception of celebrity endorsement (18.3%), indicating that they are more interested in advertisements featuring celebrity endorsers for various reasons, such as obtaining more information about the products to buy or because the celebrity is their idol. In line with Handayani and Renanita (2019), young consumers tend to "borrow" the characters of celebrities admired in building their identity. This process of searching for self-identity makes celebrities role models and inspirational figures.

Some subjects have positive self-image congruity (20.4%), even though the majority fell into the moderate category. Positive self-image congruity indicates that individuals are motivated to purchase products aligning positively with their self-image. This is because students act to maintain and enhance their self-concept and are motivated to achieve a condition (Klabi, 2020). Students with moderate self-image congruity are in the process of seeking a desired self-image. Meanwhile, individuals with low self-image congruity tend to have a higher likelihood of purchasing products that have negative associations with self-image. This can be influenced by various factors, including self-concept, as suggested by Li & Lai (2021) since each individual has a unique self-concept. Certain students may employ various activities to compensate for their perceived deficiencies, not solely relying on purchasing products to enhance their appearance.

Students with high intentions (20.6%) tend to seek more information about products or services to precisely understand the specifications before making a purchase. In addition, those with moderate purchase intentions are interested in specific products only, while individuals with low intention power tend to be less interested in seeking further information (Yuanita et al., 2022).

Perception of celebrity endorsement has a positive impact on purchase intention. Consumers may respond favorably to brand endorsers when there is a positive association with the celebrity (Carlson et al., 2020). In line with Savitri (2017), the use of celebrities can create attraction and influence consumer perceptions, increasing the purchase intention of a product. The use of celebrities as advertising figures is believed to have its appeal since consumers' attention is captured.

Celebrities also have the power to persuade, entice, and influence the target audience due to their fame.

Consumers may have a positive attitude towards products advertised by celebrities when they exhibit high trustworthiness, influencing purchase intention (Singh & Banerjee, 2018). However, the effect of celebrity trustworthiness is influenced differently by product and celebrity categories (Rahmanisah & Fadli, 2022). For product categories, the success of celebrity endorsements depends on consumer involvement with the product. Singh and Banerjee (2018) reported a negative relationship between celebrity trustworthiness and purchase intention for high-involvement products. Talented and unique celebrities are considered less credible in over-the-counter drug advertisements compared to other categories (e.g., actors, athletes), and the use of female celebrities for beauty products enhances endorsement credibility (McCormick, 2016).

Consumer perception is also influenced by celebrity attractiveness and attractive individuals are more successful in changing beliefs. In other words, attractive celebrities can persuade consumers to buy endorsed products (Park & Lin, 2020). A study found contradictory results when celebrity attractiveness failed to influence purchase intention. This occurs because the variable does not only refer to physical attractiveness (body weight, height, and facial beauty) but also includes other attributes such as intellectual skills, personality, and lifestyle (Abd Aziz et al., 2020).

From an Islamic perspective, marketing strategies using celebrity endorsers should be conducted in promoting products by exposing and explaining both apparent and non-apparent shortcomings, as a form of deception. Allah states in Surah Ash-Shu'ara verses 181-183: "Give full measure and do not be of those who cause loss. And weigh with an even balance without depriving people of their due rights and do not commit abuse on earth." Allah has given the intellect to perceive external stimuli and consider them as one of the factors in making decisions. Therefore, students should select celebrities who market products by Islamic teachings and halal products.

The results showed that self-image congruity has a positive influence on purchase intention. According to Liu et al. (2020), consumers are motivated to purchase products that have a positive value associated with self-image. This is because individuals have behavior motives that align with their self-perception. Consumers tend to select products by considering self-image, which represents the overall physical and psychological characteristics differentiating them from others. Therefore, when the consumers' self-image aligns with the product image, their attitude toward the product increases, indicating a higher purchase intention (Liu et al., 2020).

Students' experience of a strong sense of congruity between actual self-image and a specific product, combined with a high level of alignment, holds substantial meaning. This results in heightened motivation to make a purchase compared to other conditions (Sirgy, 2018). The purchase motivation is based on the expectation that the product satisfies their needs for self-consistency and self-esteem. This is shown in a student who dresses religiously and holds the belief that such a style represents an ideal image. In this case, they are likely to exhibit a high level of motivation to purchase products aligned with this self-image. This may include items like loose clothing, Moslem dresses (gamis), koko shirts, hijabs, and similar apparel. In contrast, when a student does not perceive themselves as someone who dresses religiously and does not view that image as ideal, they will experience low congruity between actual and ideal self-image. They are inclined to avoid purchasing clothing products that portray the "religiously dressed" self-image.

Individuals tend to experience motivation conflicts between the needs for self-consistency and self-esteem when the level of actual and ideal self-image congruity is high and low, respectively (Sirgy, 2018). For example, a female student who sees herself as "religiously dressed" and believes that it makes her attractive, comfortable, and aligned with religious teachings (high actual self-image congruity) but dislikes herself for being "religiously dressed" (low ideal self-image congruity). This lady does not have an ideal self-image of being "religiously dressed" because she perceives that wearing *gamis*, loose clothing, *koko* shirts, and *peci,* appears outdated or not stylish. High actual self-image congruity is also experienced by wearing clothes associated with the image but has low ideal self-image congruity. The lady is likely to be motivated to purchase products that depict the "religiously dressed" image. Therefore, approach and avoidance motivation is experienced based on the need for self-consistency and self-esteem. The resulting purchase motivation tends to be moderate, reflecting the conflict between these two self-concept motives.

In Islam, humans are considered the best image created by Allah, both physically and psychologically. This is described in the Qur'an, Surah At-Tin verse 4, which means, "Indeed, We have created man in the best of stature." This verse states that humans are created in the image of the Creator, Allah, who is the Most Beautiful. Furthermore, humans are the best form of beauty, and self-image in Islam refers to the ideal values derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. An individual's behavior rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith signifies a genuine manifestation of self-image. This emphasizes the importance of self-recognition, where all actions are guided by Allah's

commands. Consequently, the act of purchasing necessities is conducted to adhere to religious principles and values.

The limitations of this study are related to the participants since it only involved students from UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. Therefore, the analysis cannot be generalized to a broader population, different age groups, various demographic characteristics, and regions. Further study should consider these factors to obtain more comparative results. It is important to consider exogenous factors and the potential role of mediating variables, such as the relationship between psychological states and purchase intention.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the process of purchasing a product or service was not a straightforward behavior since the concept encompassed decision-making influenced by numerous significant factors. This study confirmed that the variable influenced the perceptions of celebrity endorsement and self-image congruity of students. These two psychological processes played separate roles in enhancing an individual's purchase intention, which then underlined actual purchasing behavior.

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