

## DETERMINATION OF INTERESTS IN BUYING SAMSUNG BRAND SMARTPHONE IN ONLINE LEARNING IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

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**ABSTRACT.** The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the order of all activities of human life, including in the field of education. The use of information system technology is very helpful in online learning, from elementary school to college level. Smartphones are intelligent communication tools that have many features to support online learning. The high use of smartphones has an impact on customer buying interest, especially since the Covid 19 pandemic. This study tries to analyze the interest in buying Samsung brand smartphones in online learning. The sample of this research is 98 students of Putra Indonesia University YPTK Padang. This research model is a structural equation modelling (SEM) model with SmartPLS 3 analysis tool. The results show that buying interest in Samsung brand smartphones is influenced by celebrity endorsers and brand image factors. The research findings state that the contribution of figures in the form of celebrities and brand image is a determining factor in buying Samsung brand smartphones. While the mediating effect of brand image cannot strengthen the influence of celebrity endorsers on the purchase intention of Samsung brand smartphones. This means that consumer buying interest in Samsung brand smartphones does not always pay attention to the brand image, but sometimes it is more to the celebrity endorser factor. This finding recommends that companies can further maintain and strengthen the celebrity endorser factor and be able to improve the quality of their product brand image so that consumer buying interest becomes higher in marketing their products.

**Keywords:** brand image; buying interest; celebrity endorser

### PENENTUAN MINAT MEMBELI *SMARTPHONE* MEREK SAMSUNG PADA PEMBELAJARAN *ONLINE* DI ERA COVID-19

**ABSTRAK.** Pandemi Covid-19 telah mengubah tatanan seluruh aktivitas kehidupan manusia, salah satunya dalam bidang pendidikan. Penggunaan teknologi sistim informasi semakin memperkuat penerapan pembelajaran daring di dunia pendidikan, mulai tingkat sekolah dasar sampai dengan tingkat perguruan tinggi. Kondisi ini juga berpengaruh terhadap peningkatan penggunaan salah satu alat komunikasi berupa *smartphone* dengan merek Samsung, yaitu yang merupakan alat komunikasi cerdas yang dapat digunakan dalam pembelajaran daring. Tinggi penggunaan *smartphone* ini telah berdampak terhadap permintaan dan minat beli dari pelanggan semenjak terjadinya Pandemi Covid-19. Berdasarkan uraian di atas, maka penelitian ini berusaha menganalisis penentuan minat beli *smartphone* merek Samsung dalam mendukung pembelajaran *online*. Sampel penelitian ini adalah 98 mahasiswa Universitas Putra Indonesia YPTK Padang. Penelitian menggunakan Model *structural equation modeling* (SEM) dengan alat analisis SmartPLS 3. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa minat beli *smartphone* merek Samsung pada mahasiswa dipengaruhi oleh faktor *celebrity endorser* dan *brand image*. Temuan ini mengungkapkan bahwa kontribusi ketokohan berupa selebriti ikut menjadi faktor yang memperkuat minat beli *smartphone* merek Samsung. Sedangkan faktor citra merek produk juga menjadi bagian yang ikut memperkuat minat beli *smartphone* merek Samsung. Fakta lain juga menunjukkan bahwa *brand image* tidak berperan dalam memediasi pengaruh *celebrity endorser* terhadap minat beli *smartphone* merek Samsung. Temuan ini juga menjelaskan pada kondisi tertentu minat beli pelanggan terhadap *smartphone* merek Samsung tidak selalu memperhatikan citra merek dari produk, namun terkadang lebih memperhatikan *celebrity endorser*. Temuan ini merekomendasikan agar perusahaan dapat lebih mempertahankan dan memperkuat faktor *celebrity endorser* serta mampu meningkatkan kualitas *brand image* produknya agar minat beli pelanggan menjadi lebih tinggi.

**Kata kunci:** celebrity endorser; citra merek; minat beli

#### INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the coronavirus around the world, known as the Covid-19 Pandemic, has changed the order and lives of all mankind. Starting with the discovery of many residents of the Wuhan Province in China who were infected with the coronavirus who experienced sudden

death, (Zarocostas 2020). Since then, this virus has slowly spread to all corners of the world, including Indonesia. So some of the measures and policies made by the government to stop the spread of this virus are to impose all work activities in all agencies, companies and schools or worship activities carried out at home or what is known as (Work from home). One of the impacts

caused by the Covid-19 pandemic is in the field of education and learning. Starting from schools to colleges, education and teaching are carried out online or online, which is a learning model that helps and encourages educational institutions to be able to improve services and learning processes more flexibly without being limited by time, geographic location and student attendance at school and on campus, (Fitri and Putra 2019; Mariyah et al. 2021; Putra et al. 2019; Ramadhanu et al. 2019).

For this reason, facilities and infrastructure are needed, so that the online learning process can be carried out smoothly by utilizing the internet through the use of computers (PCs), laptops or smartphones. However, the use of smartphones today is more developed and can help user mobility compared to computers (PCs), laptop. In general, a smartphone can be said to be a smart cellphone that has advanced features that can be accessed easily by every user such as email, Internet, ebook readers and many other features. A smartphone is a smart mobile device used by humans to communicate with each other which is capable of carrying out various activities, such as internet access, social media applications, and documents, (Firmansyah, dkk 2020; Kacetl and Klímová 2019). The use of this Smartphone has increased since the Covid-19 Pandemic, because it allows all activities to be carried out easily both in all work activities, including supporting online learning. The high trend of using this device has an impact on increasing demand and sales of smartphones globally and in Indonesia.

The following is the global growth data for the smartphone market share in the last 2 years:

**Table 1. Global Smartphone Quarterly Market Data (2020- 2021)**

Brands	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Q3 2021
Samsung	20%	22%	16%	22%	18%	20%
Apple	14%	11%	21%	17%	15%	14%
Xiaomi	10%	13%	11%	14%	16%	13%
Vivo	8%	8%	8%	10%	10%	10%
OPPO	9%	8%	9%	11%	10%	10%

Source: Counterpoint (2021)

From table 2, the global smartphone market share during the first quarter of 2020 to the third quarter of 2021 is occupied by the Samsung smartphone brand, although the growth trend fluctuates. In second position is Apple with a trend of market share growth throughout the 2 years also fluctuating and tends to decline in the 3rd quarter of 2021. The third position is occupied by Xiaomi with market share throughout the

year also fluctuating and tends to fall in the 3rd quarter of 2021. Meanwhile in the fourth and fifth positions are occupied by Vivo and Oppo brand smartphones with market share growth trends that tend to be stable and increase in the 3rd quarter of 2021. Based on the data above, it can be stated that the occurrence of Covid-19 in the world globally from the beginning of 2020 to 2021 affects the use of smartphones in supporting human work activities, one of which is in the field of education in supporting online learning. Where the interest in buying a smartphone is more nominated by the Samsung brand as the leader of the global smartphone market, (Counterpoint 2021). Furthermore, smartphone marketing at the national level during the last 2 years can be seen in the following table 2:

**Table 2. Indonesia: Top Smartphone Vendors in Q3 2021**

No	Vendor	Q3-2020 Market Share	Q3-2021 Market Share
1	Oppo	20%	22%
2	Samsung	16%	19%
3	Vivo	23%	18%
4	MI	20%	18%
5	Realme	13%	12%

Source: Seluler.id (Iskandar 2021).

Based on Table 2, the top position is led by Oppo brand smartphones, second Samsung, third, fourth and fifth occupied by Vivo, Mi and Realme. When compared to the global level, the smartphone market share is led by the Samsung brand, but in Indonesia, Samsung occupies the second position after Oppo and still gets good attention from the public or smartphone users. The occurrence of the Covid-19 Pandemic in the last 2 years, from early 2020 to 2021 in Indonesia, smartphone users with the largest growth were the Oppo brand with a market share of 20% in the third quarter of 2020 increasing to 22% in the third quarter of 2021. In order secondly, Samsung also experienced an increase in market share from 16% in the third quarter of 2020 to 19% in the third quarter of 2021. Meanwhile, Vivo, MI, and Realme during the two years tended to experience a decline in market share. This data reveals that smartphone brands such as Oppo and Samsung have a market share that consumers are interested in. This is due to the marketing strategy used by both smartphones based on quality, price or using other factors such as brand image and celebrity endorser which can be a force in increasing buying interest and product competitiveness, (Iskandar 2021).

The development of information system technology today greatly provides the ability and support for the implementation of work in all lines of human life. This includes the development of communication tools in the form of smartphones which are extraordinarily capable of supporting the mobilization of everyone's work effectively and efficiently. Smartphones are smart devices that are useful for humans in addition to communicating but are also capable of carrying out various activities, such as internet access, social media applications, and document processing (Jeng et al. 2010), (Lin, Chao, and Tang 2017). Pandemic Covid 19, the existence of a smartphone or smartphone really supports human work activities even though it is done at home (work from home). Especially in the field of education, online distance learning (PJJ) using smartphones for students is very helpful in following all the learning processes that have been given by the teacher (Jeng et al. 2010). Through smartphones, students can search for learning resources more optimally and use learning applications whenever and wherever (Lan et al. 2010), (Cha and Seo 2018).

Research related to the use of smartphones in online learning was conducted by (Firmansyah et al. 2020) entitled The use of smartphones on learning activities: Systematic review, which concluded that smartphones are very useful and support online learning. Research (Anon 2015; Madiawati and Pradana 2016), related to purchase interest with the celebrity endorsement factor and halal certificates for food and medicinal products. Furthermore, research (Andi et al. 2020; Pratama 2014; Sopiyan and gun Gumelar 2019) examines buying interest in smartphones using the celebrity endorsement factor, product quality, product design, brand equity, country of origin, brand image, ad appeal and price. Another research study, (Ali 2019), builds repurchase intention and purchase decisions: analysis of brand awareness and brand loyalty.

Based on previous research, this study will focus on the use of celebrity endorsement and price factors in assessing their influence on the purchase interest of Samsung brand smartphones, either directly or indirectly through brand image as an intervening variable.

This study aims to determine and analyze whether interest in buying Samsung brand smartphones is the customer's main choice in supporting online learning during the Covid 19 Pandemic. The factors used to measure buying interest are celebrity endorser factors and brand

image as a form of strength and value applied Samsung in supporting the sale of its products. In addition, this study will not only assess the direct influence of celebrity endorsers and brand image, but will also assess the indirect influence of the role of brand image in mediating celebrity endorsers in increasing interest in buying Samsung brand smartphones. The assessment of this direct and indirect influence, is the difference and the update of this research in addition to the effects of Covid 19 which also strengthens the application of technology in online learning.

## METHOD

This study uses a causal research design, namely research that measures the causal relationship between certain independent variables and certain dependent variables. This approach is useful for assessing the direct and indirect effect of celebrity endorsers and brand image on interest in buying Samsung brand smartphones. So it is known that the interest in buying a Samsung brand smartphone is not only directly influenced by the two celebrity endorser factors and brand image but also obtained information on the additional influence in the form of the role of the mediating variable in this case the brand image in strengthening the influence of celebrity endorsers on buying interest. Data collection was carried out using a survey method using a questionnaire. The research variables consist of Celebrity endorser variables (X1), Brand image (Z), and Buying Interest (Y).

Buying interest is something that arises after receiving stimulation from the product he sees, then the desire to buy and own it appears (Kotler and Armstrong 2018). In the sense that consumers who have buying interest will feel interested and motivated when they see a product or service that suits their needs or desires and finally decides to make a purchase. Assessment of buying interest variables uses indicators consisting of, a). transactional interest, b). referential interest, c). preferential interests and d). explorative interest, (Japariato and Adelia 2020).

Celebrity endorsers are an advertising approach that can provide the power to improve the image and identification of a celebrity in promoting a product or company (Dharma and Iskandar 2017). In addition, the use of celebrity endorsers also aims to convey advertising messages from products through famous personal figures such as actors, artists or athletes who are known to the public and become idolized because of

their achievements, (Jatmika, M., A 2017). The evaluation of the Celebrity endorser variable is measured using indicators in the research of Sarah, dkk (2019) which include a). credibility, b). attractiveness and d). suitability.

Kotler and Keller, (2016) “brand image is a description of consumer perceptions of a brand as a reflection of the associations that exist in the minds of consumers. The image (images) is how people interpret all the signs that are issued/ conveyed by the brand through goods, services and communication programs, In other words, image is the reputation, (Limakrisna 2011; Limakrisna and Mardo 2016). Measurement of brand image follows the indicators used, Septanto, at al (2018) which consists of a). recognition, b). reputation, c). affinity and d). domain.

The use and selection of research variables, by research problems and research conditions, which at that time was early 2020, the occurrence of Covid 19 which had an impact on the world of education for the application of online learning. Smartphones as a smart and multipurpose communication tool are very helpful in online learning, and one of the well-known brands is Samsung with brand strength and the involvement of public figures in the form of celebrity endorsers which are considered to be able to increase consumer buying interest in selling products. On this basis, the researcher and the team researched in early 2021, to know the direct and indirect effects of the factors that influence the interest in buying Samsung smartphone products at the time of Covid-19

The population used in this study were students of the YPTK Management Department, Universitas Putra Indonesia Padang, amounting to 4,213 respondents from the University Data Database (PDPT) Universitas Putra Indonesia “YPTK” Padang. By using the Slovin formula with a precision value of 10%, the number of samples can be obtained. The advantage of using the Slovin formula is to determine the right and effective number of samples from a large population. While the drawback of Slovin is, it must be known the number of new populations can be determined the number of samples, (Sevilla 2007):

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

$$n = \frac{4213}{1 + (4213 \times 0.1^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{4213}{43.13}$$

$$n = 97.68 \text{ Or } 98$$

The research model uses structural equation modelling (SEM) with the SmartPLS 3 analysis tool. The SEM model with the SmartPLS tool has several advantages including the sample size can be small, the data can be in nominal and ordinal forms and does not have certain assumptions in the assessment of a research model. In addition, researchers will be able to measure and assess the influence and relationship between variables, either directly or indirectly. In addition, the SEM model with Smartpls is able to assess and measure the complex relationship model between exogenous variables and endogenous variables with many variables. However, the SEM model with Smartpls also has limitations in the use of larger data and types of ratio data, (Abdillah and Jogyanto 2015)

Data testing in this model has carried out in 2 (two) stages, namely the outer model and the inner model. The outer model is a measurement model to assess the validity of all indicators or question items that exist for each research variable. While the inner model is related to testing the research hypothesis (Abdillah and Jogyanto 2015). To test whether the research hypothesis is accepted or rejected, it is carried out by paying attention to the T-statistic value and the P-value compared to the T-table value of 1.96 in the error of rejecting data at alpha 5%. If the T statistical value is > than 1.96 or P-value < 0.05 then the hypothesis is accepted and if the T statistical value is < than 1.96 or P value > 0.05 then the hypothesis is rejected, (Ghozali and Latan 2015; Hussein 2015; Ramayah et al. 2017).

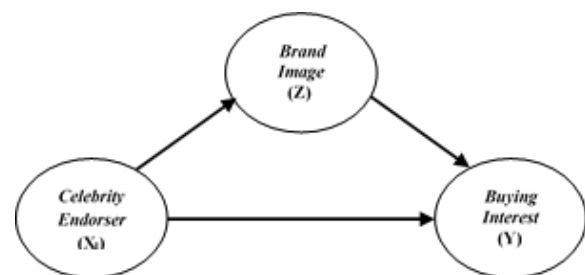


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Based on the problems and theoretical study and conceptual framework, the research hypothesis is as follows:

1.  $H_1$ , Celebrity endorser has a positive and significant effect on Buying interest.
2.  $H_2$ , Celebrity endorser has a positive and significant effect on brand image.
3.  $H_3$ , Brand image has a positive and significant effect on buying interest.
4.  $H_4$ , Celebrity endorser has a positive and significant effect on Buying interest through Brand image.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following are the characteristics of the respondents in this study, namely students of the Putra Indonesia University YPTK Padang who came from the management study program:

**Table 3. Characteristics of Research Respondents**

Description	Total	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Men	51	52,04
Women	47	47,96
<b>Age</b>		
17 - 20 Years	4	4,08
21 - 24 Years	94	95,90
24 > Years	-	-
<b>Student batch year</b>		
2016	40	40,82
2017	21	21,43
2018	15	15,31
2019	10	10,20
2020	12	12,24

Source: Data processing results, 2020

The results of the frequency distribution test showed that most of the Putra Indonesia YPTK Padang University, students in the management study program, who participated as respondents in this study, had a male gender of around 52,04% with an age level of 21 years to 24 years, namely around 95, 90%, and also came from students of class 2016, namely 40,82%. The results of data testing with SmartPLS 3 are displayed in two forms, namely testing the outer model and testing the inner model. Next, the outer model test results to assess the validity level of each indicator that makes up the construct or research variable, here are the test results with SmartPLS:

**Table 4. Research Variable Validity Test**

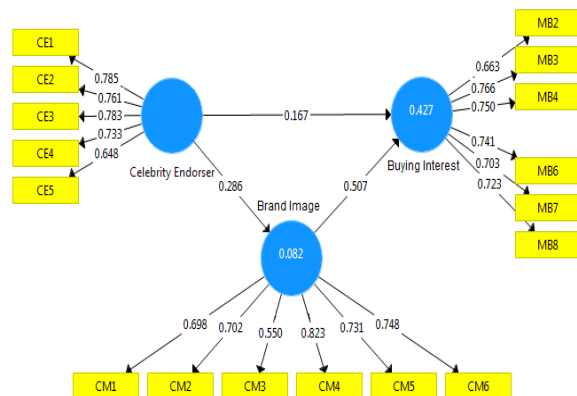
Description	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	Information
MB2 <- Buying Interest	0.663	9.910	Valid
MB3 <- Buying Interest	0.765	17.380	Valid
MB4 <- Buying Interest	0.749	13.315	Valid
MB6 <- Buying Interest	0.740	11.289	Valid
MB7 <- Buying Interest	0.703	9.502	Valid
MB8 <- Buying Interest	0.724	12.226	Valid
CM1 <- Brand Image	0.700	10.421	Valid
CM2 <- Brand Image	0.709	11.451	Valid
CM3 <- Brand Image	0.544	6.260	Valid

CM4 <- Brand Image	0.823	21.491	Valid
CM5 <- Brand Image	0.730	14.218	Valid
CM6 <- Brand Image	0.745	12.756	Valid
CE1 <- Celebrity Endorser	0.798	10.729	Valid
CE2 <- Celebrity Endorser	0.724	6.055	Valid
CE3 <- Celebrity Endorser	0.762	6.437	Valid
CE4 <- Celebrity Endorser	0.767	10.975	Valid
CE5 <- Celebrity Endorser	0.597	3.874	Valid

Source: Data processing results, 2020

The results of the outer model test show that all the indicators that make up the research variables, which include the variable buying interest, celebrity endorser and brand image appear to have met the validity level of the data because they already have a loading factor value or original sample larger than 0.5 with a large T statistic value of 1.96., (Ghozali and Latan 2015; Hussein 2015; Ramayah et al. 2017).

The outer model test results will be used as a basis for determining the inner model test related to the research hypothesis test. For testing the Inner model, there will be two outputs, the first form is a visual image or a full model that shows the relationship between each indicator or measurement variable and the parent variable and the relationship of each variable with other variables, either directly or indirectly. While the second form of output is in the form of a table that explains whether the research hypothesis is accepted or not. The following is a summary of the results of data testing with SmartPLS 3:



**Figure 2. Full Model**

The first output of SmartPLS 3 data processing is a picture of the full model that explains the relationship between the exogenous celebrity endorsement variables along with all existing indicators with endogenous variables, namely the variable buying interest with the variable brand image with the indicators that form the two

variables. In addition, it is also seen that there is a relationship between exogenous variables and brand image indicators with endogenous variables of buying interest along with the indicators that form them. In the figure, it is also seen that there is a relationship between the indirect effect of the celebrity endorser variable on the buying interest variable mediated by the brand image variable. By considering the picture above, it can be seen the coefficient value of each measurement variable with the coefficient of influence of each variable from the research hypothesis.

Furthermore, the second output from the data processing using SmartPLS 3 is a summary of the results of the hypothesis in table form, namely the results for inner weights. Following are the results of data processing with SmartPLS 3 Software:

**Table 5. Result For Inner Weights**

Description	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Value	Information
<i>Celebrity endorser -&gt; Buying interest</i>	0.193	2.308	0.016	Hypothesis Accepted
<i>Celebrity endorser -&gt; Brand image</i>	0.211	2.009	0.039	Hypothesis Accepted
<i>Brand image -&gt; Buying interest</i>	0.493	5.712	0.000	Hypothesis Accepted
<i>Celebrity endorser -&gt; Brand image -&gt; Buying interest</i>	0.104	1.767	0.071	Hypothesis in Reject

Source: Results of SmartPLS 3 data processing, 2020

### The Influence of Celebrity Endorser on Buying Interest

The results of data testing found that there was a significant influence of celebrity endorsers on buying interest for Samsung brand smartphones in students of the Putra Indonesia University YPTK Padang in online learning in the Pandemic 19 era. Where the regression coefficient was 0.193 with a T statistic value of 2.308 and a P-value of 0.016. If the T statistical value is compared to the T table at 1.96 and the P-value is compared with alpha 0.05, it can be seen that the large T statistical value of the T table ( $2.308 > 1.96$ ) and the P-value  $< 0.05$  ( $0.016 < 0.05$ ). So it can be concluded that the research hypothesis can be accepted or proven. These findings indicate that the role of celebrity endorsers in conveying messages from products or services has an influence on the buying interest of students at the Putra Indonesia University YPTK Padang in

online learning in the Pandemic 19 era. This is in line with other opinions of Andi et al. (2020), who states that the use of celebrities or artists in advertisements is intended to make the advertised products (goods or services) easier for consumers to remember. Other literature also reveals that the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers in marketing communication can be increased by matching celebrity images with product attributes (McCormick 2016; Parmar, Ghuman, and Mann 2020; Roy 2018; Um 2018).

The results of this study are in line with research Takaya (2019) dan Priatna (2018), which states that celebrity endorsers have a significant effect on buying interest in Oppo brand smartphones in Jakarta and Bandung. However, different findings from research Karim and Istiyanto (2020), celebrity endorsers do not have a significant effect on buying interest in Oppo brand smartphones in Indonesia.

The findings of other studies with different products other than smartphones reveal that celebrity endorsers have an influence and role in increasing and influencing buying interest, (Madiawati and Pradana 2016; Rachmat, at al 2019; Andi et al. 2020).

### The Influence of Celebrity Endorser on Brand Image

The findings of the research hypothesis show that there is a significant influence of celebrity endorsers on the brand image of Samsung smartphones in students of the Putra Indonesia University YPTK Padang in online learning in the Pandemic 19 era. With a regression coefficient of 0.211 with a T statistical value of 2.009 and a P value of 0.039. Where the value of T statistic is large from T table ( $2.009 > 1.96$ ) and the value of P-value  $< 0.05$  ( $0.039 < 0.05$ ). Thus this hypothesis can be proven or accepted. These findings also explain that celebrity endorsers also have a role in determining brand image. This means that the existence of an artist figure is able to increase public or consumer perceptions of the product or service it endorses. This finding was also expressed by Varghese (2019), who said celebrity endorsers are considered a modern marketing today and in the future, especially for students who are the main target who are considered to have brand awareness. Another opinion also reveals that celebrity endorsers are a common marketing communication strategy to build brand images, (Chan, Leung ng, and Luk 2013).

The results of this hypothesis also support Takaya (2019) research, which states that celebrity endorsers are an influential factor in determining

the brand image of Oppo smartphones in Jakarta. Chan et al. (2021), research in Malaysia, also found that celebrity endorsers have a significant influence on Vivo smartphone brand image.

Other findings that are also in line with research with products other than smartphones also state that celebrity endorser support has a good role in increasing the brand image of the company's products or services (Abirami & Krishnan, 2015; Megayani & Marlina, 2019; Mukherjee, 2011; Sam & Rajagiri, 2019; Shoeb & Khalid, 2014; Anon, 2013; Varghese, 2019).

### **The Influence of Brand Image on Buying Interest**

The findings of the research hypothesis from the results of data processing with SmartPLS 3, concluded that there was a significant effect of brand image on buying interest in Samsung brand smartphones in students at Putra Indonesia University YPTK Padang in online learning in the Pandemic era 19. With a regression coefficient of 0.493 with a statistical T value of 5.713 and P-value 0.000. Where the value of T statistic is large from T table ( $5.713 > 1.96$ ) and the value of P value  $< 0.05$  ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ). This shows that the hypothesis can be proven or accepted. It can be concluded that a good brand image in a product or service is also an assessment and measurement for consumers of buying interest in a product. In the sense that consumers also have high attention to fulfilling their needs, where the brand image determines the level of satisfaction and buying interest in a product. Kotler and Keller, (2016), state that "brand image is a description of consumer perceptions of a brand as a reflection of the associations that exist in the minds of consumers. A positive and strong brand image is a priority for marketers, (Liu et al. 2017). It is said that a positive brand image can improve brand performance which has an impact on buying interest (Barreda et al. 2016). The image (images) is how people interpret all the signs that are issued/conveyed by the brand through goods, services and communication programs, In other words, image is the reputation, (Limakrisna 2011; Limakrisna and Mardo 2016). Another opinion also states that brand image is not the main assessment for customers or consumers in shaping customer satisfaction in consuming certain products or services but there are other factors such as prices that end in buying interest (Putra et al. 2020).

The findings of this study are also relevant to Takaya (2019), research, which states that brand image is a factor that influences buying

interest in Vivo smartphones in Jakarta. The results of the study are different from Ardiansyah and Nilowardono (2019), research which found that brand image had no significant effect on buying Samsung smartphones among students at Narotama University in Surabaya. These findings are also in line with previous research which states that the brand image has an influence and plays a role in increasing consumer buying interest in a product or service (Andrew 2019; Febriyanti and Wahyuati 2016; Kamilah, Wahyuati, and Sekolah 2017; Windiana et al. 2020).

### **The Influence of Celebrity Endorser on Buying Interest through Brand Image**

This hypothesis is related to the indirect effect of celebrity endorser influence on buying interest through brand image. The findings of the study show that there is no significant role of brand image as a mediating variable in strengthening the influence of celebrity endorsers on buying interest for Samsung brand smartphones for students at Putra Indonesia University YPTK Padang in online learning in the Pandemic era 19. With a regression coefficient of 0.104 with a statistical T value 1.767 and P-value 0.071. It can be seen that the small statistical T value from the T table ( $1.767 < 1.96$ ) and the P-value  $> 0.05$  ( $0.071 > 0.05$ ). This means that the research hypothesis cannot be proven or the hypothesis is not accepted. Thus it can be concluded that celebrity endorsers in certain conditions are not proven to be mediated by brand image in increasing buying interest. Therefore the company must have the ability to improve the quality of the brand image of the product or service which is also comparable to the figure or achievement of celebrity endorsers in order to increase consumer purchase interest. The theory study states that celebrity endorsers aim to convey advertising messages from products through famous personal figures such as actors, artists or athletes who are known to the public and become adored because of their achievements, which in turn can accompany consumers' thoughts to have an interest in these products, (Jatmika, M., A 2017). The results of this study do not support the findings of research by Husein, at al (2016), Murti (2016), which concludes that brand image can strengthen the influence of celebrity endorsers in increasing consumer buying interest. These findings indicate that the role of celebrity endorsers in conveying messages from products or services has an influence on the buying interest of students at Putra Indonesia University YPTK Padang in online learning in the Covid-19 Pandemic era.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study found that celebrity endorsers and brand image are the main factors that determine and influence the interest in buying Samsung brand smartphones in YPTK Padang students at Putra Indonesia University in online learning in the Covid-19 pandemic era. Another fact from this study also states that celebrity endorser is a factor that is also able to determine and strengthen the brand image of a product or service. For indirect effects, the results of this study also concluded that brand image can play a role in increasing the influence of celebrity endorsers to strengthen consumer buying interest. In the future, the company must be able to improve the quality of the brand image of its products, so that the strength of the figure of the artist, actor or athlete can further strengthen consumers' buying interest in the products and services being marketed. For further research, we can look for additional factors that also contribute to strengthening buying interest and can also strengthen the role of brand image factors in increasing customer buying interest in products.

It can be added, some limitations and shortcomings that we cannot avoid in conducting the research, the difficulty of meeting respondents directly due to Covid-19. Furthermore, this study only uses one smartphone brand, namely Samsung which is indeed better known among respondents in addition to other brands and their users. also limited in some circles. These results can also be compared with the results of research on other smartphone brands such as Oppo, where the tendency of buying interest is relatively not as good as that of Samsung brand smartphones.

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