

MALE BRAND AMBASSADOR AND ITS INFLUENCE ON BRAND AWARENESS OF BEAUTY PRODUCTS

Farhan Syaputra Kosasi, Prida Ariani Ambar Astuti

Communication Science Department, Faculty of Bisnis and Communication,
Kalbis Institute, Jalan Pulomas Selatan Kavling 22, Jakarta Timur 13210

E-mail: prida.astuti@kalbis.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Women are usually the targets of beauty products. However, since 2018, many brands have used men as ambassadors for beauty products. This phenomenon is undoubtedly fascinating to study because it is contradictory. Previously, brand ambassadors for beauty products were usually women. This research wants to determine the effect of using male brand ambassadors on brand awareness of beauty products. A quantitative approach by conducting a survey was used in this research to collect data from Oh Sehun EXO fans on the Twitter account @xunqi_indonesia. There is a positive influence between the use of male brand ambassador Oh Sehun EXO on brand awareness of Whitelab beauty products. The brand ambassador indicator that most influences beauty product brand awareness is the credibility indicator, meaning that a credible figure and repeated delivery of persuasive information will only cause short-term effects, as stated by the elaboration possibility model theory as the central theory of this research. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the Whitelab brand still needs to be at the top of respondents' minds but is still at the brand recognition and recall stage.

Key words: Beauty product; brand awareness; elaboration likelihood model; male brand ambassador

INTRODUCTION

The increasing use of local beauty products causes high competition, which, of course, causes companies to have the right marketing strategy to survive. Kotler (2003) said that among a series of capabilities, communication and promotion are the most important in marketing. Communication in this context is comprehensive, from how people viewed the company and the colours that symbolize the company to the clothes worn by company employees. Not limited to just this aspect, Kotler (2003) also explains that communication can also mean how to promote the products the company sells well and audience reception. Kotler also said that integrated marketing communication means integrating various communication channels to convey the meaning of the company's identity and message perfectly. One strategy in integrated marketing communications is the use of brand ambassadors. Andrews and Shimp (2018) explain that brand ambassadors are essential in marketing communication strategies because they can influence audiences to be interested in a brand.

According to Budiman et al. (2018), brand ambassadors are usually celebrities or those with a large social media following. Social media has an essential role in integrated marketing communications because, with this new media, companies can unleash creativity to convey messages to their audiences better. New media itself means a product of more sophisticated communication that has convergence where previous media communication is in one direction. New media communication has more significant opportunities in two directions (Batubara & Yoedtadi, 2022). Therefore, using brand ambassadors is considered appropriate with the support of this new media because it can reach a wider audience.

Selecting an exemplary brand ambassador is also essential to the company's marketing communications efforts. There are several characteristics for selecting a brand ambassador, namely first, visibility or the scale of how famous the selected brand ambassador is, especially among the audience who follow the products sold by the company. Second, credibility or the scale of the chosen brand ambassador's ability to use or promote the company's products, and finally, there is attraction or how interesting it is to use this brand ambassador to increase the audience's buying interest in this product (Rossiter et al., 2018). The higher the attraction a brand ambassador has, the higher the audience's awareness of the brand.

Beauty products themselves are usually used mainly by women, or in other words, most buyers of beauty products are women. According to the ZAP Beauty Index (2023), as many as 36.2% of women in Indonesia consider that beauty care is more important than shopping for clothes, shoes or bags. Over 60% of women in Indonesia use four beauty care products daily. Eileen Kamtawijoyo, Co-Founder and COO of Populix, stated that 7 (seven) out of 10 (ten) women in Indonesia shop for beauty care products every month (Fimela.com, 2022). These findings show that most women in Indonesia use beauty care products, so competition for marketing communications on local Indonesian beauty products becomes fierce, considering the large number of enthusiasts for these beauty products in Indonesia. Furthermore, the ZAP Beauty Index (2023) also states that as many as 96.8% of women in Indonesia use local beauty products, which is certainly a positive point for the development and progress of beauty product brands in Indonesia. This research also resulted in the finding that 19% of women in Indonesia exclusively use local beauty products, and 77.8% of women in Indonesia use foreign and local beauty products.

Even though beauty products are mostly sought after by women, there has been a new phenomenon involving the use of male figures or celebrities as brand ambassadors in recent years. The use of male brand ambassadors certainly feels contradictory, considering that brand ambassadors are usually figures or celebrities with an image that aligns with the company. Li (2020) stated that in China alone, in the first 7 (seven) months of 2018, 17 international beauty product brands, such as Lancôme, Elizabeth Arden and Maybelline, used men as their brand ambassadors. The use of male brand ambassadors has also spread to Indonesia with examples such as Refal Hady for Avoskin, Rangga Azof for Whitelab, Edric Tjandra for Evershine, Teuku Ryan for Scarlett Whitening, and many other beauty brands that use brand ambassadors who are top local celebrities from Indonesia.

Apart from using male figures or celebrities as brand ambassadors for beauty products, another phenomenon in Indonesia is the use of male celebrities from South Korea to become brand ambassadors for local beauty products. The use of male brand ambassadors from South Korea is due to the influence of the Korean Wave, or what is known as Hallyu. According to Yanthi et al. (2020), the Korean Wave means spreading culture, living habits and other aspects of South Korea to other countries through celebrities and trending things. In other words, with this Korean Wave, using celebrities from South Korea as male brand ambassadors can increase public awareness of these products. Examples include Oh Sehun for Whitelab, Park Hyung Sik for Avoskin, Lee Min Ho for Azarine, Cha Eun Wo for MS Glow, Song Joong Ki for Scarlett, NCT Dream for Somethinc, and many more.

One of the local beauty products that researchers want to focus on is Whitelab. Whitelab is a local beauty product brand founded in March 2020. Since its founding, Whitelab has used several beauty influencers and brand ambassadors. Previously, most of the brand ambassadors chosen by Whitelab were local Indonesian celebrities such as Rangga Azof, Bintang Emon, Haico Van Der Veken, and most recently, Bunga Citra Lestari, known as BCL. However, the brand ambassador who collaborated with Whitelab, who attracted the public's attention, was one of the boy group singers from South Korea, Oh Sehun (EXO). Oh Sehun is a singer who is a member of a famous boy group in South Korea called EXO. It was also proven through Untari (2019) that EXO is the boy group with the largest fandom in the world of pop music from Korea. The use of Oh Sehun as a male brand ambassador for beauty products is also exciting considering the large number of Oh Sehun followers in Indonesia, like data from the Twitter account @xunqi_indonesia (2023), which is Oh Sehun's most enormous fanbase in Indonesia with 38 thousand followers. The Twitter account @xunqi_indonesia is also affiliated with Oh Sehun Global (@ohseunglobal on Twitter), a collection of Oh Sehun fanbases worldwide. Based on the explanation above, this research wants to know:

1. Is there an influence of male brand ambassador Oh Sehun EXO on brand awareness of Whitelab beauty products?
2. How strong is the influence of male brand ambassador Oh Sehun EXO on brand awareness of Whitelab beauty products?
3. What is the influence of male brand ambassador Oh Sehun EXO on brand awareness of Whitelab beauty products?
4. Which indicator of male brand ambassador Oh Sehun EXO most influences brand awareness of Whitelab beauty products?

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach. Researchers collected data by distributing questionnaires to fans of Oh Sehun EXO via his fanbase account on Twitter @xunqi_indonesia. Researchers used a closed questionnaire with answer choices of strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree to maintain the effectiveness of respondents' answers and make it easier to obtain data summaries through data analysis. Two data analysis techniques were used: descriptive data analysis using the Overall Mean Score and statistical hypothesis testing using the correlation coefficient test, simple linear regression test, and partial T-test. This research hopes to obtain the meaning of cause and effect, which in this research uses independent and dependent variables, which are the male brand ambassador Oh Sehun EXO and the foundation of the Whitelab beauty product brand.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most respondents in this study were Generation Z, aged over 17 years. Generation Z was chosen as research subjects because they have become aware of and used beauty products since age 13 (Fauziah, 2020). Apart from that, Fadli (2022) stated that the right age for someone to start using beauty products is 17 years old.

Table 1 shows that the average answer result for the male brand ambassador variable is 3.57, which means that respondents agree that Oh Sehun EXO is appropriate to be used as a male brand ambassador for Whitelab beauty products. Meanwhile, brand awareness of beauty products produces a figure of 3.46, which indicates respondents' agreement that they know Whitelab beauty products.

Table 1 Overall Mean Score Brand Ambassador (X) and Brand Awareness (Y)

Variabel	Overall Mean Score	Kesimpulan
Duta Merek Pria	3.57	Setuju
Kesadaran Merek	3.46	Setuju

Sumber: Olahan Peneliti (2023)

The results of the correlation between variables x and y are as follows:

Table 2 Correlation Coefficient
Correlations

		male brand ambassador	brand awareness
male brand ambassador	Pearson Correlation	1	.455**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	128	128
brand awareness	Pearson Correlation	.455**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	128	128

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In this study, the results of the correlation coefficient test were 0.455, which means that the two variables have a sufficient relationship. Based on this calculation, the Oh Sehun EXO brand ambassador has a sufficient influence on Whitelab brand awareness.

Next, to determine the influence of male brand ambassadors (X), on variable brand awareness of beauty products (Y), the researchers used a coefficient of determination test. The results of testing the coefficient of determination were 0.207 or 20.7%, meaning that the ability of the male brand ambassador Oh Sehun EXO to influence the Whitelab brand awareness was 20.7%. In comparison, the remaining 79.3% was influenced by other factors not examined. Based on the results of this calculation, it is not enough to build brand awareness of beauty products to use brand ambassadors; other factors influence how consumers will be aware of a particular brand.

Table 3 Determination Coefficient
Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.455 ^a	.207	.200	3.05869

a. Predictors: (Constant), male brand ambassador

b. Dependent Variable: brand awareness

Researchers used a linear regression test to determine the influence of male brand ambassadors (X) on brand awareness of beauty products (y). In this study, the result (a) or a constant of 21.508 was obtained, which means the value of variable y if variable x is zero, and bX was 0.559. The result also showed that bX, a positive number that can answer the direction of influence of variable brand (y), will also increase by 0.559 or 55.9%. In contrast, if the direction of the resulting influence is negative, it can be interpreted as if variable x increases by one (1) unit, then variable y will experience a decrease. The linear regression test can also answer the direction of influence of the male brand ambassador variable on the brand awareness of beauty products. The bX was 0.559, a positive number. In that case, there is a positive relationship between male brand ambassadors and brand awareness of beauty products, or more simply, if male brand ambassadors experience an increase in value, then brand awareness of beauty products also increases in value. The results of linear regression calculations show an influence of 0.559, which means that brand ambassadors are only one means of integrated marketing communication, and other aspects can increase brand awareness among the audience (Noviyanti, 2017).

Table 4 Linear Regression Test
Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	21.508	3.494		6.157	.000
	male brand ambassador	.559	.098	.455	5.728	.000

a. Dependent Variable: brand awareness

This analysis can also test hypotheses by looking at the Partial T-test. Based on Table 4, the figure obtained is 5.728 (positive), which, when compared with the t table, is 1.658, which means the calculated t is greater than the t table. With this in mind, Ho is rejected, and Ha is accepted and has a positive direction, which can be determined from the t-count results. With this explanation, it can be determined that the male brand ambassador influences brand awareness.

The partial regression test in this research was carried out to determine which indicators of the male brand ambassador had the most influence on beauty product brand awareness. After carrying out the calculations, the result was that the visibility indicator got a score of 0.126, the credibility indicator got a score of 0.833, and the interest indicator got a score of 0.493. Although previously in the overall mean score test, the lowest result for variable This is also reinforced by the statement quoted from Kirana et al. (2020), that the use of brand ambassadors must be credible because that way, it can make the audience more receptive to messages from brand ambassadors. A credible brand ambassador is a brand ambassador who has achievements. In this case, Oh Sehun EXO, as the Whitelab brand ambassador, is considered credible because he has several achievements, such as being a brand ambassador for many international products, being the leading actor on the big screen, and being a model for international magazines.

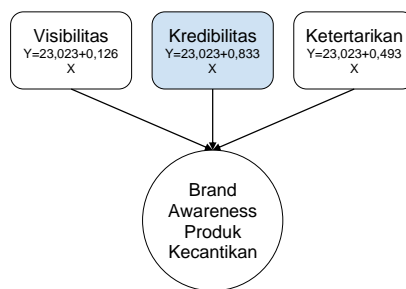


Figure 1 Brand Ambassador Indicators that Most Influence Brand Awareness

CONCLUSION

The conclusions of this research are as follows:

1. The male ambassadors influence brand awareness of beauty products in a positive direction, and the strength of the relationship is quite strong. The strength of the relationship between male brand ambassadors and brand awareness of beauty products is included in the sufficient category because brand awareness is only one aspect of integrated marketing communications, and brand ambassadors are only one factor among other factors that influence consumers' awareness of a brand.
2. The indicator of male brand ambassadors that most influence brand awareness of beauty products is credibility, so the credibility of male brand ambassadors is essential for increasing brand awareness of beauty products. The credibility of a brand ambassador can make the audience more receptive to the message conveyed so that marketing communications run more effectively.
3. Calculation of the average value of the brand ambassador variable resulted in the finding that the male brand ambassadors known to the respondents were public figures because they often appeared in the media, had a good reputation related to the activities they carried out, and were an ambassador for many international brands and even international brands. To calculate the average value of the brand awareness of a beauty product, most respondents only remember the product identity, know and remember the brand, but the brand still needs to be at the top of the respondents' minds.
4. This research's findings align with the Elaboration Likelihood Model theory because through the use of male brand ambassadors as part of an integrated marketing communications strategy, brands can convey messages to their audience. There are two routes in the Elaboration Likelihood Model theory, namely, the peripheral and central routes. This research can be categorized in the peripheral route because using credible figures and conveying information persuasively and repeatedly can cause short-term changes in the audience. In the peripheral route, audiences only receive messages based on their emotional state and

only spend a small quantity of time considering an option. Apart from that, this theory also explains that the audience needs to be stronger in remembering the message conveyed. This can be proven by calculating the average value for the brand awareness variable, which has yet to reach the top of the respondent's mind.

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