CONSUMER PERCEPTION ON CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT ONLINE CLOTHING AND INTENTION TO PURCHASE

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**THE CONSUMER PERCEPTION ON CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT
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ABSTRACT

Shopping clothes through the Internet has become more popular in this digital world. Business owners have to make their products more outstanding than their competitors by using various methods including celebrity endorsement. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumers' purchasing intention online clothing products and other factors that affect their intention to purchase.

This study utilizes the qualitative approach using the in-depth interview. The interview was conducted with 15 respondents in the age group 20-40 years old.

This research revealed that celebrity endorsement is attractive for consumers, but it is not the reason to buy clothes online. The most influencing factor is convenience. Product quality is viewed as second. In addition, the other potential factors that have been found in this study are review from other consumers, as well as trust and security.

KEY WORDS: Online clothing / Celebrity endorsement / Shopping online

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, conducting a business online is very popular especially among small and medium entrepreneurs, as it requires low investment and the Internet usage rate has been increasing continuously. The number of Internet users in Thailand had increased from 2,300,000 users in 2000 to 20,100,000 users in 2014 (Internet Usage in Asia, 2014). Thus, conducting a business particularly on the Internet is a significant marketing channel that has no boundary. Targeted customers can be reached easily without the limitation of place and time. As a result, the number of online business has become greater especially businesses that sell clothes online.

Shopping clothes through the Internet has become more popular in this digital world. Customers can find their desired clothing everywhere and every time. So, business owners have to make their products more outstanding than their competitors by using various methods including celebrity endorsement, which is one of the most popular forms of marketing.

Celebrity endorsement has been defined as any individual who enjoys public recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement. (McCracken, 1989) There are many brands that use celebrities as presenters or brand ambassadors in order to endorse their products. The brands may make the use of celebrities' reputation or their images. Because of the fact that people like celebrities, many online clothing shops use the celebrities as the endorser to make their products more credible and to convince their potential customers to purchase. However, hiring the celebrities requires high cost. There are numerous shops that use non-celebrity endorsement such as the owners themselves or hiring non-celebrities to present their clothes. Moreover, because the endorsers represent the image of the products, positive images of the endorsers could create customer attitudes and vice versa.

1.1 Problem Statement and Research Objectives

Because the more the Internet users rise, the greater the online shopping on clothing market has been. Therefore, the numerous online clothing shops are founded and owned by Thais. Some brands use celebrities as the presenters of the products, while some use non-celebrities or even the owners themselves to present their products. Many of them send their products to the celebrities, influence them to wear their clothes, take photos with the products, and upload the photos on social media. The basic idea why marketers use celebrity endorsement is quite simple, that is, because celebrities are known publicly and people like them. The more the Internet users rise, the greater the online shopping on clothing market has been.

Therefore, the purposes of this study are to investigate the customer perception on celebrity endorsement about online clothing shops/businesses, and to identify the other factors that affect the purchasing decision of consumers.

1.2 Expected Benefits

The expected benefits of this study are providing the consumers' perception on online clothing and using celebrity endorsers to the people who are interested in. These benefits can be an idea or inspiration for entrepreneurs who are currently selling clothing products online as well as people who are planning to do so.

1.3 Scope of Study

This study focuses on the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumers' purchasing intention on online clothing products, and identifies the other factors beside the endorsers that affect consumers' intention to purchase.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrities are well-known individuals who are fame and public attention such as television stars, movie actors and actresses, famous athletes, entertainers, etc.). Celebrity endorsement has been commonly used to maximize the advertising effectiveness for decades. McCracken (1989) defines a celebrity endorser as any individual who enjoys public recognition and who use the recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement. While, Friedman and Friedman define a celebrity endorser is an individual who is know to the public for his or her achievement in areas others than of the product class endorsed (Friedman & Friedman, 1979).

Marketers have used celebrities to sell the product for long, because they can strengthen the appeal of advertisement and also the product offered. When celebrity is used to endorse the product with the hope that the positive associations attached to the celebrity would transfer to the brand (Iacobucci, 2015). From the previous studies, celebrity endorsement has positive influences of trustworthiness, message remembrance, and advertisement likeability on consumers' purchase intentions (Menon and Rogers, 2001; Pornpitakpan, 2003; Pringle & Binet, 2005; Roy, 2006).

There are various factors related to celebrity endorsements, and one of them called *source credibility*. It means "the consumer interprets the message as the most important information but also processes the credibility of the source as a cue to the likely validity" (Iacobucci, 2015, p.336). The source effect is divided into three dimensions, which are trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness.

The first source is trustworthiness. It refers to "the honest, integrity and believability of an endorser" (Erdogan et al. 2001, page 40). It is the most important

factor with regard to the source credibility and influences credibility. Moreover, likeability is mentioned as the most important attribute of trust (Friedman, 1978). In the world of online business, trustworthiness is crucial. It can turn the visitors to be customers. Before engaging to the transaction online, customers have to rely on the retailers first.

The next source is expertise of celebrity endorsement, which an endorser perceived to be a source of valid assertions (Erdogan, 1999,). Celebrity does not need to be real expertise in the particular field. It is important that consumers think and believe a celebrity has expertise (Ohanian, 1990). Therefore, celebrity endorsement can attract the customers to purchase the products or services.

The other source is attractiveness of the celebrity that can catch the cusomers' eyes. Celebrities can be attractive as people have great respect to their achievement and attracted to them. Also, Cohen & Golden (1972) have suggested that a celebrity has a physical attractiveness of persuasion as a result of consumers wanting to be like the endorser.

Nevertheless, Dzisah and Ocloo (2013) have found that celebrities alone do not guarantee success. Also, Using celebrity to endorse the product does not mean it is a great advertising campaign or the best possible product. The success is the combination of several factors especially the price and other elements working together including the acceptance in consumers' minds and marketing offering.

Celebrity and Non-Celebrity Endorsement on Consumers' Attitudes

Celebrities are widely used in marketing in order to promote products and have been found that the use of celebrity endorsers is the most effective than other kinds of endorsers (Seno & Lukas, 2007). This is because celebrities try to bring the image of the product closer to consumer expectation by residing their image to the product. So, celebrity have greater influence compared to non-celebrity, as well as celebrity has the capability of delivering deeper meanings and power on product (Kasana, 2014). However, Pujawati & Noraini (2015) found that the endorser characteristics for both celebrity and non-celebrity endorsement are relevant to consumers' attitudes but with different relationship strength. The endorser characteristics affect consumers' attitudes towards advertisement but in different degrees of influence between celebrity and non-celebrity endorsers.

2.2 Factors that affect Online Purchasing Decisions

Nowadays, the way customers purchase the products online has changed over the years. There are more and more customers buy the products online and they have become more powerful than in the past. Thereby, the marketers should understand the key factors that affect the purchasing decision well in order to satisfy their customers. Kim E. and Kim Y. (2004) identified the fundamental factors in consumers' purchase intentions on purchasing clothes online, which are transaction cost, incentive programs, site design, as well as interactivity.

Transaction Cost

This factor perceived as the most significant includes eight attributes: credit card security, fast delivery time, cheaper than retail stores, no or low shipping charge, money-back guarantees, privacy assurance, access to a major credit card and information on reliability of seller.

Incentive Program

The second factor, incentive program, which consists of six attributes: give away, frequent visit points, free trial, entertainment, membership benefits, and online redeemable coupons. However, this factor has been found that may not be essentially important.

Site Design

Site Design, includes trained and licensed raters, virtual tours, and word-of-mouth endorsement. The well-designed site can draw customers' attention and make them experience similarly as shopping in store experience. This factor perceived as the third most important factor among these four fundamental factors.

Interactivity

The fourth and the last factor is the interactivity or the association between buyers and sellers. This attribute is perceived as the second most important.

Kim E. and Kim Y. (2004) found the salient implications for e-marketing strategies for clothes. They came across online transaction issues (i.e. credit card security, privacy assurance, access to a major credit card and information on the reliability of the seller) and low cost (i.e. fast delivery time, cheaper process than retail stores, no or low shipping, handling charge and money-back guarantees) are significant factors in online purchasing product. As a result, the risk-free image could

be a key strategy for online business in order to attract consumers. Encouraging the credit card security is one possible approach to ensure consumers about their security and privacy risk. Online shop should also offer other values to consumers such as cumulative discounts or free shipping to deliver the competitive value to consumers.

While, the factors affecting consumers' buying behavior were divided into two dimensions which are external and internal. External factors are from environment and internal factors are from consumers' mind (Kumar et. al, 2012).

External Factors

According to Warner, the external factors could be divided into five parts, which are demographics, socio-economics, technology, public policy, and marketing.

Internal Factors

Internal factors are the psychological processes, including attitudes, learning, perception, motivation, self-image and semiotics.

Moreover, there are also 3 factors that rank among the topmost filtering elements in the customers mind. This means that customers will purchase the products from online based on these aspects, which are security, privacy, and trust. Since, online shopping has higher risk when comparing to in-store shopping. Even though, shopping online provides many functional advantages (Kumar et. Al, 2012).

Security

There are many reasons behind the financial risks. So, many web merchants are offering third-party security protection, and this could make the consumers more confident to provide their information to the site.

Privacy

On the Internet, the private information can be tracked and used by third parties to send spam mails. Thus, electronic customers should be aware the privacy risks. However, the sites that have the privacy statement and third party verification could reduce some of customer concerns.

Trust

A research shows that online trust is lower level than the face-to-face interactions in the physical store. So, online trust is the basic and essential element for building a relationship with customers.

CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following discussion is the research methodology used in this paper. The research design, population and sampling, as well as data collection are described in this chapter.

3.1 Research Design

The research in this paper used qualitative approach, which is the method that interpreting the text data through a classification process and identify the patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Because, it is an investigative type of research designed to reveal target customers' behavior and perception on specific issues. This study was conducted in order to understand the underlying reasons and motivations of customers on celebrity endorsement on online clothing shopping and their intentions to purchase.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population constituted any online cloth purchasers. Fifteen interviewees, who usually purchase online clothing, participated in this study. All of participants were interviewed by in-depth interview. The sample group was chosen by non-probability sampling technique and the age range is between 20 to 40 years old.

3.3 Data Collection

In-depth interview was used to answer the questions of this study. The purpose is to gather the information of online clothing market. This approach was a primary data collection, since it is the method that describes the behavior and

perception of customers on online cloth shopping. All of the participants were interviewed, the most common method.

A list of open-ended questions was used to help the interviewees to share their thoughts and opinions towards the interview. The questions provided are as follows;

- Do you buy clothing online? How often?
- What kind of clothes do you usually buy?
- How much do you spend on average per purchase?
- How do you know online clothing shop? From which source? (e.g. website, social network, friends, etc.)
- What do you think about celebrity endorsement on clothing?
- What are the differences between clothing products with celebrity and non-celebrity endorsement?
- Do you think that using celebrity endorsers on clothing is effective? Why or why not?
- What are the factors that attract you to purchase clothing online?
- Which factors that you consider as priority when you decide to purchase clothes online?
- Are there any other factors that probably affect purchasing intention on online clothing products?
- What are your expectations towards buying clothes online?

Moreover, there are also some demographic questions focusing on gender, age, education, occupation, and income. All questions and answers were taken as a reflective note in order to help the researcher to categorize the given information

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results of the gathered data are presented. This study investigated the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumers' perception on online clothing products, as well as the other factors besides the endorsers that affect consumers' intention to purchase clothes online. The data were collected by in-depth interviews from 15 respondents who have ever shopped the clothes online.

4.1 Observation Findings

Internet has become a convenient way of doing business. The number of online shops has increased, not only on websites but also on social network such as Facebook and Instagram. Some brands use celebrity to endorse the brand, while mostly not.

Nowadays, in Thailand, Facebook and Instagram are the channels those clothing retailers use to sell their products, since they are the cheapest channels to own a shop and also widely reachable because of the large number of users. Thailand has 37 million Facebook users and 7.1 million Instagram users. Moreover, Facebook is the primary information source for Thai online shoppers, seeing that 57% of Facebook users access Facebook to search for the details about products and services (Leesa-Nguansuk, 2015).
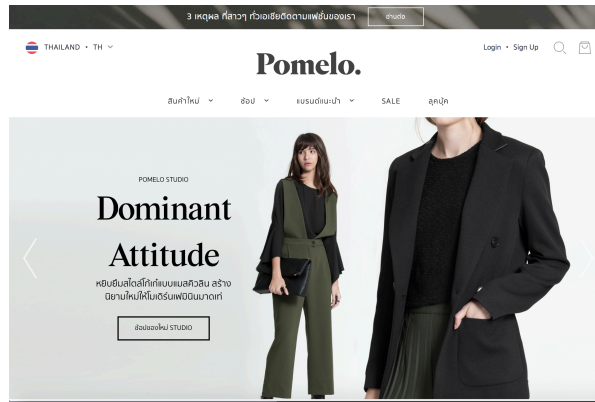
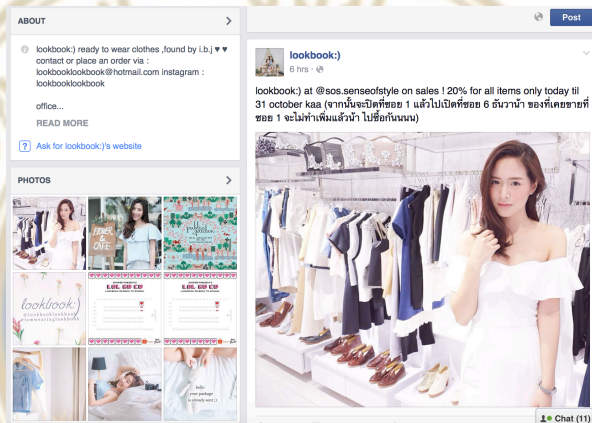**Figure 4.1 Example of Popular Website Selling Clothes Online**

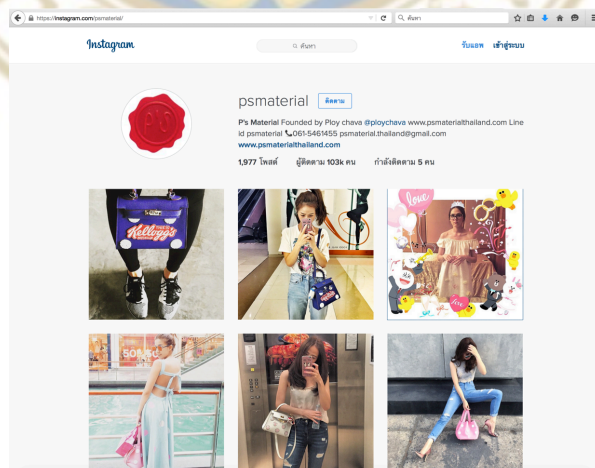**Figure 4.2 Example of Clothing Business Page on Facebook**

Figure 4.3 Example of Online Clothing Store Using Celebrity Endorser

4.2 Demographic Profiles of Respondents

Demographic characteristics of respondents acquired from in-depth interviews were presented in Table 4.1. There were 15 participants who have ever purchased clothes online, 3 are male and 12 are female, which accounted for 20 and 80 percent respectively. Most of respondents (73.33 %) age between 20 - 30 years old. With regards to the educational level, the respondents, who held Bachelor's degree are 46.67 %, and 53.33 % are in Master level. The majority of the respondents earned an average monthly income more than 50,001 baht/month, and 86.67 % of them are employees.

Table 4.1 Demographic Backgrounds of Respondents

Demographic Background	Quantity	Frequency Percentage
Gender		
Male	3	20.00
Female	12	80.00
Total	15	100.00
Age Range		
20 - 30	11	73.33
31 - 40	4	26.67
Total	15	100.00
Educational Level		
Bachelor's degree	7	46.67
Master's degree	8	53.33
Total	15	100.00
Income Range (bath/month)		
10,000 - 20,000	3	20.00
20,001 - 30,000	3	20.00
30,001 - 40,000	2	13.33
40,001 - 50,000	1	6.67
More than 50,001	6	40.00
Total	15	100.00
Occupation		
Business owner	2	13.33
Employee	13	86.67
Total	15	100.00

4.3 Consumers' Perceptions towards Purchasing Clothing Products Online

Whilst interviews, fifteen respondents were interviewed on the experiences towards purchasing clothes online about the impact of celebrity endorsement and the factors that affect their intentions to purchase.

From the interviews, all of the respondents have ever purchased clothes from social network sites, which are Facebook and Instagram, and some also experienced in purchasing clothes from other websites. The majority of respondents spent about 1,000 to 2,000 Baht per purchase. The results reveal that the respondents (11 out of 15) mostly purchase the clothes based on their personal preference or the design of clothing rather than the celebrities.

4.3.1 Impact of Celebrity Endorsement on Consumers' Perception on Online Clothing Products

More than 50 percent of respondents, who purchase the clothing products online at least once a month, agree that celebrity endorsement on online clothing, catches the eyes of customers since those celebrities are well known people. They can raise the awareness, and perhaps purchase intention as well. Some of respondents mentioned as per the following example;

"For the popular online stores, celebrity endorsement will make the clothes seem more interesting whilst the unpopular stores without celebrity won't. However, beautiful pictures can also make the products more interesting as well."

"I would say, of course, using celebrities would catch the eyes of the audience better than nobody model, but I concern more about the design."

"I would guess celebrity endorsement is effective for most people, because some people would want to look like a celebrity when wearing clothes."

"If the celebrity is famous, celebrity endorsers will attract more customers and increase followers of that store."

The interview result is in line with the previous study that a celebrity has a physical attractiveness of persuasion as a result of consumers wanting to be like the endorser (Cohen & Golden, 1972).

Furthermore, the respondents mostly agreed that only celebrity endorsement is not enough and not the main reason to purchase the products. These findings match with the previous study of Dzisah and Ocloo (2013), which mentioned that celebrities alone do not guarantee the success. The success comes from the combination of several factors work together.

4.3.2 Factors Affecting Intention to Purchase

From the results of the interviews, the factors that affect the intention to purchase of the respondents are as follows;

Convenience

Respondents (9 out of 15) mostly gave this determinant as a main factor considered to purchase clothes online. The following examples were mentioned during the interviews.

"I buy the clothes online, because it's easy to compare the price. I do not have to choose the product immediately. I can look around, switch back and forth to see more product availability."

"I like shopping online, since I can compare price and quality of the clothes I want to buy anywhere and anytime. I do not have to walk for many hours to find the clothes I want, and there is no closing time."

"Sometimes, I do not have time to go out and walk around for many hours to buy clothes."

"The reason I buy it online because I don't have time to go to the mall."

This factor is not mentioned in the previous studies.

Product Quality

Product quality is a factor that respondents gave significantly when they decide to buy clothes online as follows;

"To me, product quality is the first factor in considering to buy the clothes or not."

"When I want to buy the clothes, I always look at the actual pictures from many lights and many angles of the actual products that I am going to buy."

"I expected that the products I bought from online shop would be same quality as shown online."

"The products I bought should have same size, same color, and same quality as in the websites."

This factor is also not mentioned in the previous studies.

Review from Other Customers

From the interviews, review from others customers also affected the intention to purchase of respondents, and the followings are the examples of what the participants mentioned about.

"The things I always concern when shopping online are the reviews and feedbacks from the other customers, also, the way the sellers interact with their customers. If there are some bad feedbacks or the sellers ignore their customers, I would avoid buying the clothes from these stores."

"The number of likes and followers could be the good sign of the stores. The higher number would make the store websites more trustable and attract buyers like me to make transaction with."

"I would say that the reviews of other customers about the products or services of the store are included in my determination."

"The factor that probably affect my intention to purchase is the review of the website or blog, how do they response to the customer when things go wrong, and how fast they reply the messages."

The previous studies do not mention about this aspect.

Trust and Reliability

Trust and reliability are also the factors found from this study. Some of respondents mentioned as follows;

"Reliability of the shop can attract me to purchase the clothing online. I would buy the clothes only from the shops I trust. A large number of the followers, the payment method, also the review from others could make me trust them, and assure that I won't be cheated."

"The reason I buy it online because I don't have time to go to the mall. I don't buy the clothes online from the random sellers, but I buy clothes online from the brands I can trust."

"I buy the clothes from online store I can trust. For example, I always concern about the security of payment method. I only buy clothes that can be paid by

Visa or Mastercard, because I trust in their security programs, and I will not buy it if that particular online store does not accept them."

This finding can support that trust and reliability are significant in customers' mindsets in considering buying clothes online. Moreover, it is also in line with the previous study of Kim E. and Kim Y. (2004) that risk-free image could be a key strategy for online business in order to attract consumers. Online trust is the basic and essential element for building a relationship with customers (Kumar et. al, 2012).

CHAPTER V
RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Practical Implications

Internet now has become the channel people can purchase anything including clothes. Every clothing store has their own methods to attract customers. One of strategies is using celebrity endorsers as the presenter of their clothes. From the findings, the celebrity endorser can catch the eyes of consumers, raise their awareness, and probably increase their purchase intention. Because using celebrity endorser requires very high cost, so it is optional depending on advertising budget of each online store. However, it is not the main reason for customers to buy the products. The endorsers catch the eyes of customers, but they cannot encourage customers to purchase the clothes. The primary reason of buying clothes online is convenience, since the customers can take time to consider the products, as well as compare the prices among many sellers. The study also found that there were other mindsets of online clothing shoppers, which are quality of the product, review from other customers, trust, and security.

The findings of this study shall benefit online clothing sellers, entrepreneurs, and also people who plan to do so. In order to provide the products and services that match with customers' mindsets, it is not essential to use celebrity endorser. Because, the customers concern on many factors all together, not the celebrity alone. One of respondents added a suggestion that beautiful pictures of clothes also attract the customers. However, convenience is the major reason to buy clothes online. Moreover, most of respondents expected to get the clothes with the same quality as shown in advertisements. So, the sellers or shop owners should use the pictures taken from the real products instead of using the similar design but different qualities. Advertising on social networks could also reach more potential customers. In addition, the online clothing store should create the websites to be reliable for customers. The online store pages or websites should be regularly updated, as well as

provide the tracking numbers for customers to track their packages. The product details should also be contained fully together with the pictures of products on the websites. Moreover, the sellers should talk to the customers about their satisfaction and ask them for writing short reviews in order to create more trust to the potential customers. The other important point is providing contact information on the sites to assure that the stores truly exist.

5.2 Limitation of the Study & Recommendation for Future Research

There are some potential limitations in this study. Firstly, online purchaser participants are small sample size (N=15) in using in-depth interview. Therefore, the future study may be conducted by using quantitative research approach to test the relationship between variables found from this study, and also the decision making to purchase clothes through online channels in order to develop marketing plan for successful clothing shops online. The data should be collected from more sampling to provide more accuracy. The results were compared to develop and improve to adjust the basic requirements for the needs of online clothing customers apart from personal preferences such as the styles of clothes.

Secondly, the interviews conducted for this study were based on the convenience of the researcher. So, this might be only a specific group of people and conceptualizations, as well as a limited time. The significant findings from this study might infer a general results.

Thirdly, the inference from various sources such as time limitation of interviewees, phone rings, as well as several biases could emerge during the interview. In the future research, the proper time should be arranged, also participants would be asked to switched their mobile off during the interviews.

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