

The power of reverse-gender endorsement in beauty product advertisement: A study of Gen Z consumer purchase intention in Thailand

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Abstract

The rise of gender equality and openness to LGBTQ topic has shifted the landscape of topics and trends among mass media and consumer behavior. Reverse gender endorsements are becoming a growing popular strategy, where male celebrities are portrayed in female product advertising. With the growing popularity of “Boys' love” (BL) TV series and movies across South-East Asia, marketers have started recognizing their potential as brand endorsers and use their influence to attract female consumers. This research aims to fill the gap of reverse gender endorsement of BL actors by studying the effects of male celebrity endorsement on purchase intention among Thailand female Gen Z consumers. A total of 455 valid online questionnaires were collected and regression analysis was conducted by using SPSS 29 to test the proposed hypotheses. The study examined the effects of four factors on purchase intention: attractiveness, credibility, product match-up, and perceived quality. The findings suggest that Boy' Love's celebrity endorsement can be an effective marketing strategy for beauty products targeting female Gen Z consumers in Thailand. The study highlights the potential benefits associated with using Boys' Love's celebrity endorsers in beauty product commercials and emphasizes the importance of prioritizing the endorser's credibility, product match-up, and perceived quality rather than solely relying on endorser attractiveness.

Key words: Celebrity Endorsement, Gender Reverse Endorsement, Product Match-Up, Boys' Love, Purchase Intention

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探討性別逆向代言在美妝產品之影響力： 以泰國Z世代女性之購買意願為例

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摘 要

性別平等的興起和社會大眾對LGBTQ（非異性戀的社群統稱）之接受度與包容性趨於開放，因此性別逆向代言正在成為一種日益流行的策略。隨著Boys' Love（BL）電視劇和電影在東南亞越來越受歡迎，相關品牌業者也看中這些男性演員作為品牌代言人的潛力，並利用性別逆向代言的影響力來吸引女性消費者。本研究目的在通過研究男性名人代言對泰國Z世代女性消費者購買意願的影響，並共收集455份有效在線問卷，利用SPSS 29進行回歸分析來檢驗所提出的假設，並且探討「代言人吸引力」、「代言人可信度」、「代言人與產品匹配度」和「知覺品質」對於購買意願之影響。研究結果發現，性別逆向代言可以成為針對泰國Z世代女性消費者在美妝產品的購買意願上有正向影響。同時，該研究強調了廣告中使用Boys' Love男性代言人的效益，並應優先考慮代言人的可信度、產品匹配和感知質量的重要性，而不是僅僅依賴代言人的外在吸引力。

關鍵詞：名人代言、性別逆向代言、產品配適度、購買意圖、Boys' Love（BL）

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I. Introduction

Celebrity endorsement has been a popular marketing strategy for brands for decades, as it has the potential to attract a larger audience, increase the effectiveness of advertisements, and shape brand perception (Agarwal & Garg, 2021; Spry et al., 2011). Moreover, consumers' preoccupation with celebrities can lead to increased sales for the endorsed brand, as loyal fans of the celebrity are likely to follow their recommendations and perceive the endorsed product as a valuable friend's suggestion (Agarwal & Garg, 2021). That is particularly relevant for the Gen Z consumer base, as studies have found that celebrity endorsements significantly impact their purchase intentions (Ellison et al., 2017; Kantar Millward Brown, 2017). According to Dimock (2019), Pew Research Center defines individuals born from 1997 onward as part of Generation Z, the new generation which continues after Millennials which use 1996 as the last birth year. As the largest consumer base by 2030, it is crucial for businesses and organizations to understand Gen Z's consumer behavior (Meurling & Nordgren, 2022).

Thailand's accepting attitude and openness to LGBTQ minority groups and the consumers' curiosity of romantic love among same gender couples has led to the popularity of Boys' love drama in Thailand around 2019 (Guzman, 2022). Boys' Love (BL) is a genre of drama in Thailand that is known for portraying young and visually attractive male actors who are involved in a romantic relationship with those of the same gender. The Thai beauty market has experienced substantial growth since 2013, with an annual increase of 7.2–7.9%, leading to heightened competition between international and local brands (Euromonitor, 2014; International Trade Administration, 2019).

In recent years, male models and actors that have raised to stardom due to their huge success in starring in Boys' love drama series has caught the attention of many marketers (Zsila & Demetrovics, 2017). Boys' love series, which portray romantic love between two men, have gained a massive following of young women fans from Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America (Chaiyong, 2021). In particular, the popularity of Boys' Love series is expanding rapidly in Southeast Asian countries, especially in Thailand, where one of the top TV providers currently airs over fifty Boys' love series with more than one billion views (Parnpiamkiat, 2020). As a result, marketers have started to select Boys' love actors as brand endorsers in their marketing strategies (Frankel, 2020). While previous research has found a positive impact of reverse-gender endorsement on millennial female consumers' attitudes toward advertisements and products (Frankel, 2020), there is a lack of research on the effects of Boys' love celebrity endorsement and purchase intention on the beauty industry. In a

relevant study conducted in South-Africa focusing on Gen Z female consumers, the authors studies the celebrity endorser's credibility and attractiveness on consumer attitude and found that regardless of the actual purchase or not, if the consumer trusted the endorser, they would have positive attitudes towards the product brand (Macheka et al., 2023). In another study on endorser attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise on purchase intention conducted in China pointed out that regardless of endorser type (the study used the top 3 female virtual idols in the country), physical attractiveness for selling beauty-related products were especially of high importance as it could provide visual support that using the product could enhance outer beauty (Chiu and Ho, 2023). These studies support the notion that celebrity endorsement in the beauty and cosmetic industry has a crucial influence regardless of culture. Yet, gender reverse endorsement still remains unclear of its impact, as the celebrities whom are male will be the main influencers in the advertisements to use female products in hope to appeal to the consumers. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of Boys' love celebrity endorsement on consumers' purchase intentions, focusing on the Thailand female Gen Z consumer and exploring the factors of attractiveness, credibility, product match-up, and perceived quality in beauty product commercials.

II. Literature Review

A. The Rise of Boys' Love Among Media and Advertising

To differentiate themselves in this competitive landscape, many companies are turning to celebrity endorsements as a marketing tactic to distinguish their brands and appeal to a broader customer base (Jittimitre, 2016). BL can be seen as a new form of "soft power," since it possesses a strong influence that comes from Thailand's cultural and economic strength rather than military force (Vuving, 2009). The popularity of BL has helped its fan base to grow in Thailand and other countries, leading to businesses in Thailand choosing BL celebrities as product endorsers. Celebrity endorsements not only generate interest and awareness about the brand but also have the potential to create a positive association between the celebrity's image and the brand's attributes. As a result, consumers may develop an emotional connection with the brand and become more inclined to purchase its products. In addition to enhancing brand recognition, celebrity endorsements can facilitate trust-building with consumers, as they often perceive celebrities as more credible and relatable figures. Consequently, leveraging the power of celebrity endorsement can be a valuable strategy for companies seeking to thrive in the increasingly competitive Thailand beauty market.

B. The Influence of Celebrity Endorsement on Purchase Intention

Celebrity endorsement is a well-established marketing strategy, with one of the earliest examples being the use of baseball player Honus Wagner's image on tobacco cards in the early 1900s (Cilea, 2021). However, the early 1930s became the turning point for advertising to influence a significant factor in the development of society and the economy. Celebrities from diverse fields including art, modeling, sports, and the film industry have been employed as spokespersons to endorse and promote products or services (Kambitsis et al, 2002).

Studies have demonstrated that utilizing celebrity endorsers can enhance the visibility of advertisements and foster more favorable attitudes toward the ads, the products, or the brands they promote, ultimately increasing the likelihood of consumers making a purchase (Yang, 2018). One of the key advantages of celebrity endorsement is its ability to capture the attention of consumers. According to Erdogan (1999) and Ohanian (1990), the selection of celebrity endorsers is often based on their attractiveness, as they can effectively harness both their fame and physical appearance to enhance their persuasive impact. Celebrity endorsers can help to differentiate a brand from its competitors and create a unique selling proposition (Erdogan, 1999). Furthermore, the ability of celebrity endorsement to influence consumer attitudes and purchase intentions is another advantage. Findings also suggest that celebrity involvement in advertising can yield favorable results for the credibility, recall, and likability of the ad, ultimately leading to positive impact on purchase intention (Menon et al., 2001).

Furthermore, celebrity endorsement can help companies emotionally connect with their target consumers. By associating the brand with a celebrity who has a strong emotional appeal, companies can create a sense of connection with their target audience and build brand equity (Erdogan, 1999). Overall, celebrity endorsement is a powerful marketing strategy that can provide numerous advantages for companies. As consumer needs and expectations continue to evolve, marketers must continue to adapt their strategies in order to effectively and emotionally connect with their target consumers. The effectiveness of celebrity endorsers on purchase intention may rely on factors such as the endorser attractiveness, credibility of the source, and celebrity product match-up (Khan et al., 2019; Spry et al., 2011; Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019).

C. Reverse Gender Advertising in Gender Fluid Marketing

Reverse Gender Advertising in Marketing is a relatively new concept that only recently with the rise of new media, have marketers noticed that a change in consumption pattern and the changing definition of beauty is diversified. The meaning and representation of masculinity and femininity is changing, and gender reverse advertising is developing rapidly (Shen, 2022).

Shen (2022) studied reverse gendering advertising on TikTok and noticed that the proportion has slowly increased since it not only captures the attention of the female audience, but also makes a deep impression on consumers which could indirectly increase product sales. As the author pointed out, when “beautiful boys” endorse female products, the viewers will be more enthusiastic to try the product or brand.

Although reverse gender advertising has not been fully and deeply examined, yet researchers have already noticed a similar trend which was known as “Gender Fluid Marketing” (Stan, 2018, McIntyre, 2019, Hämäläinen, 2019, Frieling, 2022) which we believe is the very similar concept in which reverse gender advertising falls within the domain. Gender fluid marketing can be defined as a specific type of gender marketing in which gender non-specific language and expressions are used to communicate with their target audience (Frieling, 2022) which the ideas of gender identity that are fixed in biology are now being challenged and changed (McIntyre, 2019). The restructuring and questioning of gender identity has led consumers to be more open and curious about the opposite gender portraying female or gender-neutral characteristics.

D. Celebrity Attractiveness

Physical attractiveness is a crucial factor in determining the appeal of celebrity endorsers to audiences, as suggested by the commonly used terms such as “attractive,” “classy,” “nice,” “stylish,” and “sexy” used to assess physical beauty (Ohanian, 1991). Marketers use the power of beauty in advertising by using physically attractive celebrity endorsers to enhance brand image and increase their sales potential (Said & Napi, 2015). When it comes to interpersonal marketing sales, beauty and charisma can be more persuasive than that of an unattractive individual (Reingen et al., 1984), the likeable appearance can attract potential customers and convince them to become brand loyalists (Baker & Churchill, 1977).

This idea that attractive individuals are more convincing is supported by Ohanian (1991), who suggests that attractive people are more effective in changing beliefs compared to relatively unattractive individuals. Sallam & Wahid (2012) found that the attractiveness of a celebrity endorser has a strong and positive impact on a consumer’s intention to buy. Hudha and Hidayat (2009) also concluded that the attractiveness of celebrities in television advertising has a strong relationship with customers and a favorable effect on their brand choice behavior in Indonesia. In addition, the study by Till and Busler (2000) found that consumers’ perceptions of the physical attractiveness of a celebrity endorser positively influence their attitudes toward the brand and purchase intentions. Moreover, research has shown that the attractiveness of a celebrity endorser can also impact the credibility of the advertising message. Petty and Cacioppo’s

(1981) elaboration likelihood model suggests that the attractiveness of a communicator can act as a peripheral cue, leading to greater persuasion through affective responses rather than through cognitive elaboration; this means that consumers are more likely to be influenced by the physical attractiveness of a celebrity endorser rather than the content of the advertising message. Therefore, we propose hypothesis 1:

H1: Celebrity attractiveness is positively related to purchase intention.

E. Celebrity Credibility

As highlighted in Glover's (2009) research, credibility of endorsers is a key factor in influencing consumer attitudes towards advertisements. Previous studies have indicated that increasing endorser credibility can lead to higher message attention, recall, and a favorable brand attitude. Moreover, endorser credibility has been shown to influence consumer purchase decisions and promote positive word of mouth (Ahmed et al., 2014), as well as create emotional connections with consumers and establish sustainable relationships between the consumer and the brand (Natarajan & Chawla, 1997; Till & Busler, 2000). These findings highlight the importance of establishing trust and credibility in celebrity endorsements to effectively influence consumer behavior. They have practical implications for marketers seeking to optimize their advertising campaigns through effective celebrity endorsements.

In order to ensure credibility, companies should select celebrities who possess expertise and trustworthiness, according to Ohanian (1990). Expertise refers to the endorser's ability and experience in giving a precise evaluation of a brand or product, whereas trustworthiness is the public's perception of an endorser's reputation for being a dependable individual who consistently demonstrates honesty and maintains high levels of integrity. Consumers perceive credible sources as having more knowledge about the product and therefore pay more attention to their endorsements, leading to more positive purchase intentions (Glover, 2009).

The credibility of the endorser is also linked to the credibility of the brand, as stressed by Wang and Scheinbaum (2017) and confirmed by Chin and colleagues (2019), who noted that high brand credibility signifies better product quality, value, and worth, which fosters a more optimistic consumer attitude. Additionally, credible advertisements encourage consumers to purchase the brand and persuade others to do the same.

Companies often select celebrities for endorsements based on their popularity, but a celebrity's credibility is also crucial as it positively influences consumer willingness to buy. Therefore, companies should conduct surveys to identify the most credible celebrity for their promotional campaigns instead of solely relying on their fame (Ahmad et al., 2014).

Additionally, as Thwaites et al. (2012) argued, companies should consider that negative publicity might impact celebrity credibility. Thus, we propose hypothesis 2:

H2: Celebrity credibility is positively related to purchase intention.

F. Celebrity Product Match-up

Celebrity product match-up is defined as “the degree of match between accessible endorser associations and attributes associated with the brand” (Kirmani & Shiv, 1998). According to Jamil and Rameez (2014), the product match-up concept implies a resemblance between the personality traits of celebrities and the attributes of the brands they endorse. In this regard, selecting a celebrity whose image closely aligns with the product can greatly improve the level of confidence in both the product’s advertisement and the celebrity endorser, as opposed to a less relevant and less well-known endorser (Kotler, 1997). Moreover, Ahmad and Farooq (2014) found that when consumers perceive a celebrity has experience using a product, it positively impacts their purchase intention.

Mishra and colleagues (2015) stated that consumers form perceptions based on their assessment of celebrity personality traits and brand attributes. The presence of a strong alignment between these two factors can significantly contribute to a positive attitude toward the brand. Thus, celebrity image must be similar and matched-up for the advertisement to be effective (Kamins, 1990; Min et al., 2019). Wright (2016) points out that a high degree of similarity between endorsers’ personality traits and the brands’ attributes can generate a favorable attitude towards the endorsed brands and enhance consumers’ purchase intentions. That also aligns with the study conducted by Till and Busler (2000), who discovered that the congruence between the celebrity endorser and the product significantly determined the consumer’s attitude towards the brand.

Kamins (1990) proposed the product match-up model, which recommends the use of attractive female celebrities to endorse beauty products that aim to enhance physical appearance. For example, Song Hye Kyo, a famous Korean celebrity, endorses Sulwashoo, a cosmetics product from Korea and has brought great success to the brand’s sales performance (Wuisan & Angela, 2022). However, Debevec and Iyer (1986) argued that advertising effectiveness would be better when the product gender and endorser’s gender were inconsistent. Indeed, recent studies have suggested that using male celebrities to endorse female products could be an effective marketing strategy (Frankel, 2020; Xu & Pratt, 2018).

According to several studies, firms should prioritize the personality of the celebrity endorser over their physical attractiveness when choosing an endorser (Bergkvist et al., 2016;

Khan et al., 2019). When there is a lack of congruence between the endorser's personality traits and the brand attributes, the advertisement may confuse the audience, leading to a decrease in purchase intention (Fleck et al., 2012). Moreover, such incongruency may reduce consumer trust and cause them to perceive that the celebrity is endorsing the product solely for being highly paid (Erdogan, 1999). Additionally, the "vampire effect" may occur, where the audience only remembers the celebrity and not the product, as the celebrity overshadows it (Evans, 1988). Aligned with these past studies, we propose hypothesis 3:

H3: Product match-up is positively related to purchase intention.

G. Consumers' Perceived Quality

Perceived quality, as a critical aspect in consumer decision-making, is a subjective evaluation of a product's overall excellence or superiority in the eyes of the customer. Research has demonstrated that perceived quality positively influences purchase intentions, shaping consumers' choices and preferences (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Olsen, 2002). Additionally, Olsen (2002) highlights the direct influence of perceived quality on purchasing behavior, while Brady and Cronin (2001) argue that it is the fundamental driver of buyer intention. Consumers are not only likely to purchase high quality products but also spread positive word-of-mouth (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019).

Advertising and endorsements are essential factors that can influence perceived quality (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019). In particular, celebrity endorsements can enhance consumers' perceptions of a product's quality and credibility, as the celebrity is often viewed as an expert in their field. Additionally, the trustworthiness and credibility of the endorser are crucial in shaping consumer perceptions of product quality (Erdogan et al., 2001). Furthermore, perceived quality has captured the attention of researchers and marketing practitioners due to its potential to positively impact marketing performance (Tsotsou, 2006). In fact, Subrahmanyan (2004) found that consumers are willing to pay a premium for products they perceive as high quality. Brand image also plays a significant role in shaping perceived quality, as it can impact how consumers evaluate a product's excellence or superiority (Chin et al., 2019). Lee and colleagues (2011) found that customers tend to perceive higher quality from brands with a positive image, emphasizing the importance of cultivating a strong and favorable brand reputation. Furthermore, research conducted by Anridho and Liao (2013) revealed that a brand's perceived expertise and trustworthiness contribute to positive customer attitudes, reinforcing the connection between a well-regarded brand image and enhanced consumer perceptions of quality.

In conclusion, perceived quality is a critical factor influencing consumers' purchase

intentions and behaviors. Several factors shape it contributing to the formation of perceived quality, including brand image, advertising, and endorsements. By understanding the factors influencing perceived quality, marketers can develop effective strategies to enhance consumer perceptions and improve purchase intentions. Therefore, we propose hypothesis as below, all the proposed hypotheses can be seen in Figure 1 below.

H4: Perceived quality is positively related to purchase intention.

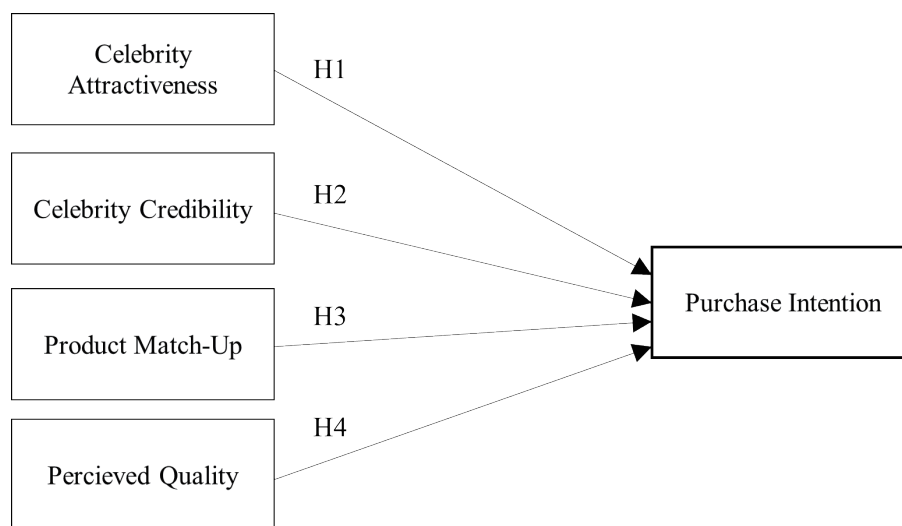


Figure 1. Research Framework

III. Methodology

A. Measurement Scales

The constructs in our framework were adapted from Khan et al. (2019). The first part of the instrument will collect demographic data from the respondents, including their age, level of education, and country of residence. This information will provide insights into the characteristics of the sample and help identify any demographic trends that may affect the study results. The second part of the instrument will measure the five constructs (attractiveness, credibility, product match-up, consumer perception of quality, and purchase intention) in our research framework. Each variable will be measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 for “Strongly Disagree” to 5 for “Strongly Agree,” to measure the respondent’s perception of the BL celebrity endorser in the beauty product commercial and their likelihood to purchase the product.

The first section, *endorser attractiveness* contains four questions a sample item is “*I think the Boys’ Love presenter is attractive*”. The second section, *endorser credibility*, includes

five questions, a sample item is “I buy the product because it is endorsed by a trustworthy BL celebrity”. The third section, *product and endorser match-up*, contains three questions, a sample item is “Product Match-up between the Product and BL celebrity influence my purchase decision”. The fourth section, *consumer perception of quality* has four questions, a sample item is “brands endorsed by BL celebrities are of high quality”. Purchase intention contains five questions, a sample item is “Cosmetic brands endorsed by BL celebrities draw my attention”. In order to fit the context of this study, some of the measurement items were slightly modified in their wording. For instance, when measuring celebrity endorser, instead of the original item which was “I think the endorser is attractive”, our survey reworded it to “I think the BL endorser is attractive.” One filter question at the very beginning of the survey was designed to target the correct participants which asked, “Have you ever watched BL drama?” In this research, we did not test for the effects of control variables, as we believe that the participants are already narrowed down to the suitable target market. However, more will be discussed in the latter section of research limitations.

B. Research Subjects

Convenience sampling was used by distributing an online questionnaire among Thai Gen Z students and the identity of the participants are kept anonymous. The questionnaire targeted female undergraduate and university students from 2 universities in Thailand, Mahidol University International College (MUIC) and Kasetsart University Sriracha Campus (KU). The survey was created using Google Forms and was sent to the participants through online channels, such as LINE, Facebook Messenger, and Instagram one-month period from the beginning of January in 2023. A total of 455 responses were collected through the Google Form survey. This study investigates the consumer behavior of Gen Z individuals aged between 18 and 25.

Our sample population mainly consisted of undergraduate Thai students, which reflects the target population. Regarding educational background, 10 participants are high school students, 435 attain bachelor’s degrees, and 10 have a master’s degree or higher. While most of the participants (98.9%) currently live in Thailand, six of them reside outside of the country.

Table 1. Demographic data of participants

	Total number of Counts	Percentage
Age		
Below 18	10	2.2
18-25	433	95.2
26 or above	12	2.6

	Total number of Counts	Percentage
Level of Education		
High School	10	2.2
Bachelor Degree	435	95.6
Master Degree or higher	10	2.2
Country of Residence		
Thailand	450	98.9
China	2	0.5
Switzerland	1	0.2
Taiwan	1	0.2
Poland	1	0.2
Total	455	100

I. Results

A. Descriptive Analysis & Reliability

Attractiveness had a mean score of 4.43 ($SD = 0.850$), indicating that, on average, participants agreed that the celebrity endorser was attractive. The distribution was negatively skewed (skewness = -1.642), indicating that more participants rated the celebrity endorser as very attractive than those who rated the celebrity endorser as unattractive.

Credibility had a mean score of 3.64 ($SD = 1.188$), indicating that, on average, participants had a moderate level of agreement regarding the celebrity endorser's credibility. The distribution was slightly negatively skewed (skewness = -0.546), indicating that more participants rated the celebrity endorser as credible than those who rated the celebrity endorser as not credible.

Product match-up had a mean score of 3.67 ($SD = 1.171$), indicating that, on average, participants had a moderate level of agreement regarding the product match-up between the brand and the celebrity endorser's personality. The distribution was slightly negatively skewed (skewness = -0.614), indicating that more participants perceived a good match-up between the brand and celebrity endorser's personality than those who perceived a poor match-up.

Perceived quality had a mean score of 3.66 ($SD = 1.088$), indicating that, on average, participants had a moderate level of agreement regarding the perceived quality of the endorsed product. The distribution was slightly negatively skewed (skewness = -0.514), indicating that more participants perceived the endorsed product as having good quality than those who perceived the product as having poor quality.

Purchase intention has a mean score of 3.42 (SD = 1.277), suggesting that, on average, participants had a moderate level of purchase intention toward the endorsed product. The distribution was slightly negatively skewed (skewness = -0.370), indicating that more participants reported a higher level of purchase intention than those who reported a lower level. Overall, these findings suggest that celebrity endorsement had a moderate effect on purchase intention among the study participants (please refer to table 3).

The Cronbach’s Alpha model’s reliability test is an evaluation of the instrument’s internal consistency (Faizal, Naziman, & Samat, 2019). Cronbach’s Alpha is a reliable coefficient demonstrating the extent to which items within a set are strongly interrelated. Generally, reliabilities below 0.6 are regarded as poor, those in the 0.7 range are acceptable (van Griethuijsen et al., 2014; Taber, 2018). Results showed that all five constructs had high Cronbach’s alpha coefficients, indicating good reliability (please refer to table 2). These findings suggest that the measurement items for all constructs were reliable and could be used to accurately measure the respective constructs in the sample population.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis

Construct	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
Attractiveness	4.43	0.850	-1.642	2.668
Credibility	3.64	1.188	-0.546	-0.471
Product Match-up	3.67	1.171	-0.614	-0.372
Perceived Quality	3.66	1.088	-0.514	-0.294
Purchase Intention	3.42	1.277	-0.370	-0.824

Table 3. Cronbach’s Alpha

Construct	Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Attractiveness	4	.919
Credibility	5	.789
Product Match-up	3	.804
Perceived Quality	4	.942
Purchase Intention	5	.935

B. Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29) was conducted to investigate the relationship between multiple independent variables and a single dependent variable. The model summary output provided information on the R, R Square,

Adjusted R Square, and Std. Error of the Estimate measures was used to evaluate the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables and to assess the degree to which the model accounted for the variation in customers' purchase intention. In addition, to examine the relationship and correlation of the studied variables in this research, a Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted (please see Table 4). As seen in Table 3, the correlation coefficients were all found to be significant at 0.01 level, with "Credibility" and "Product Match-Up" to have the highest correlation, $\rho = .727^{**}$, while "Credibility" and "Purchase Intention" had the second highest correlation, $\rho = .708^{**}$. To test for multicollinearity, we observed the VIF (variance inflation factor), which is the correlation between the predictor variables in a regression model using SPSS. Since the general rule of thumb for multicollinearity is to be below 5, as a VIF value higher than 5 could indicate that the regression outcomes are unreliable due to a severe correlation among two different predictor variables. The VIF value of our analyses ranged from 1.33 to 2.46 which showed that there was no concern for multicollinearity in this study.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the relationship between the independent variables, perceived quality, attractiveness, credibility, product match-up, and the dependent variable, purchase intention (please refer to Table 4). The ANOVA results revealed a statistically significant result, $F(4, 446) = 155.544, p < .05$, indicating that the independent variables as a whole had a significant impact on purchase intention.

Further examination of the ANOVA table showed that the regression sum of squares was 340.971, with four degrees of freedom and a mean square of 85.243. That suggests that the independent variables collectively accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in purchase intention. The residual sum of squares was 244.421, with a *df* of 446 and a mean square of .548. Findings suggest that the independent variables collectively had a significant effect on purchase intention, with perceived quality, attractiveness, credibility, and product match-up being essential factors to consider in predicting consumer behavior.

In Table 5. the beta coefficients, t-statistics, and corresponding p-values were computed for each independent variables. These statistical measures were used to determine the strength and significance of the relationships between the variables. According to the results, H2 was supported, suggesting that credibility is a significant predictor of purchase intention ($B = .371, SE = .059, \beta = .288, t(4) = 6.316, p < .001$). That indicates that for every one-unit increase in credibility, purchase intention is predicted to increase by .371, holding all other variables constant. That implies that the more credible the endorser is perceived to be, the more likely the participants will have a stronger intention to purchase the product.

Similarly, hypothesis H3 was supported, indicating that product match-up is a significant predictor of the dependent variable ($B = .394$, $SE = .056$, $\beta = .343$, $t(4) = 7.00$, $p < .001$). This suggests that for every one-unit increase in product match-up, purchase intention is predicted to increase by .394 while controlling for the effects of other variables in the model. This finding indicates that participants who perceived the product to be congruent with the endorser were more likely to have a stronger intention to purchase the product.

Moreover, the study's results also provide support for hypothesis H4, which suggests that perceived quality is a significant predictor of purchase intention ($B = .303$, $SE = .046$, $\beta = .267$, $t(4) = 6.64$, $p < .001$). This implies that for every one-unit increase in perceived quality, purchase intention is predicted to increase by .303 while controlling for the effects of other variables in the model. This suggests that participants who perceived the brand's quality to be high were more likely to have a stronger intention to purchase it.

Contrary to our expectation, H1 was not supported by the study's findings. The variable attractiveness was found to be insignificant in predicting purchase intention ($B = -.061$, $SE = .054$, $t(4) = -1.11$, $p = .265$). A significance level of $p < .001$ is commonly used in social science research to indicate a high degree of confidence in the results. In this case, since the p-value is larger than this threshold, we can conclude that hypothesis H1 is not supported.

Table 4. Correlation Coefficients Table

		Correlations				
		1	2	3	4	5
Attractiveness	Pearson Correlation	1	.468**	.508**	.422**	.400**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
Credibility	Pearson Correlation	.468**	1	.727**	.581**	.665**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000**		.000	.000	.000
Product Match-up	Pearson Correlation	.508**	.727**	1	.630**	.708**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
Perceived Quality	Pearson Correlation	.422**	.581**	.630**	1	.631**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
Purchase Intention	Pearson Correlation	.400**	.665**	.708**	.631**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	

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

Table 5. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model	Sum of Squares	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)		-.244	.216		-1.037	.300
Attractiveness		-.061	.054	-.041	-1.117	.265
Credibility		.371	.059	.288*	6.316	.000
Product Match-Up		.394	.056	.343*	7.002	.000
Perceived Quality		.303	.046	.267*	6.642	.000
Regression	340.971					.000
Residual	244.421					
Total	585.392					

a. Independent Variable: (Constant), Perceived Quality, Attractiveness, Credibility, Product Match-Up

b. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intentio

V. Discussion

This study aimed to explore the impact of BL celebrity endorsement, specifically attractiveness, credibility, product match-up, and consumers' perceived quality of the brand toward consumer purchase intention. The study revealed that three out of the four independent variables, namely credibility, product match-up, and perceived quality, had a significant effect on purchase intention. However, the fourth variable, attractiveness, was found to be not a significant predictor of purchase intention.

Credibility has become one of the crucial factors in predicting purchase intention. The positive and significant relationship between credibility and purchase intention suggests that consumers are more likely to purchase beauty products when endorsed by trustworthy BL celebrities. This result aligns with previous research emphasizing that celebrity credibility positively relates to consumer purchase intention (Ahmed et al., 2014). Their study highlighted that whether the communicator is an actual expert and trustworthy is not important as long as the audience perceives it that way. Erdogan (2001) stated that when advertisers choose celebrity endorsers, source credibility is a critical factor to consider since prior research has shown its substantial and direct influence on attitudes and behavioral intentions.

This study analyzed the use of BL actors as endorsers for make-up and beauty products. BL actors who are popular in TV series can be perceived as credible endorsers due to the characteristics they exhibit on screen. These actors often portray characters with well-

groomed appearances and flawless skin, which can make them appear knowledgeable about cosmetics. In addition to their renown as an actor in a prominent Thailand TV series, the endorser has effectively showcased their expertise and authenticity through their social media presence, which could also shape consumers' perceptions of their credibility (Frankel, 2020). Thus, using BL actors to endorse make-up and beauty products can lead to increased purchase intentions. However, it is important to note that source credibility is not the sole factor to consider in the selection process.

Moreover, this study found that product match-up is a significant predictor that drives consumers' purchase intention. This suggests that consumers are more likely to purchase the product when there is a good match between the product and the BL celebrity endorser. This finding is also consistent with prior research highlighting the significance of match-up between the product and endorser in endorsement advertising (Kamins, 1990; Min et al., 2019; Wright, 2016).

Specifically, Thailand Gen Z female consumers are a very suitable target market for brands and companies that strategically employ BL actors as the endorser for the following reasons below. First, both credibility and product-match up positively influenced the Gen Z female consumers that we surveyed to have a likely purchase intention in the future for gender reverse endorsed items. In a previous study on Thai Gen Z consumers and purchase intention for K-POP idols, the study pointed out that when consumer expectations were satisfied and met, they would continue to support the artist and their work (Widyanto and Agusti, 2020). This supports our research that if consumers find that the endorser to be trustworthy and suits the product image, they will be more willing to purchase it. Second, perceived quality of the product is an important indicator of purchase intention, this is especially interesting as it is a variable which exists independently of the endorsers. This signifies that Gen Z female consumers place a strong emphasis on the perceived quality of the product. While the Gen Z female consumers in this study did not find attractiveness of the endorser as a main influence factor to purchase the advertised product, which is the contrary to what past studies have found regarding traditional advertising (Widyanto and Agusti, 2020), we believe perhaps it may be because that reverse gender endorsers have other qualities other than physical attractiveness that leads to purchase intention.

This study examined the congruence between male endorsers and female-targeted products in advertising and found that reverse gender endorsement can be an effective marketing strategy. This finding is consistent with Debevec and Iyer's (1986) study that advertising effectiveness can increase when the gender of the product and endorser is

inconsistent. In today's society, there is an increasing number of advertisements that feature opposite-sex endorsers, which creates a greater contrast and leaves a deeper impression on viewers, resulting in better advertising effectiveness, as noted by Hsiao and Li (2019). Additionally, research has shown that male beauty endorsers have established a robust online presence on social media, showcasing their ability to use make-up and beauty products. This behavior may influence consumer perceptions of celebrity product match-ups and increase the likelihood of imitating their behavior and trying the product (Frankel, 2020).

Furthermore, this study revealed that a positive perceived quality has a significant impact on consumer purchase intention. This indicates that consumers are more likely to purchase products from brands with reliable, consistent quality and excellent features. This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the direct influence between perceived quality and consumer purchase intention (Olsen, 2022). Similar previous studies also found that perceived quality has a positive impact on purchase intentions (Khan et al., 2019; Shahnawaz & Khurram, 2019). Wilson and colleagues (2016) argue that consumers' evaluation of a brand's quality is subjective and varies from person to person. Therefore, businesses must focus on creating a positive brand image that resonates with their target market. However, it is not just the brand image that can influence consumer perception of quality. The credibility of an endorser can also have a positive impact on how consumers view a brand's quality (Chin et al., 2019; Erdogan et al., 2001). Overall, this study confirmed that perceived quality is a significant determinant of purchase intention. Attractiveness was tested as a determinant of purchase intention in this study. Nonetheless, the results revealed that this variable is insignificant, which suggests that the physical attractiveness of the BL celebrity endorser may not play a critical role in shaping consumers' intention to purchase beauty products. This result is somewhat surprising, given that earlier research has indicated endorser attractiveness as a significant factor toward purchase intention (Hidayat, 2009; Khan et al., 2019; Sallam & Wahid, 2012; Till & Busler, 2020).

Previous research has emphasized that attractiveness is a key attribute in persuasive communication that can significantly influence consumer behavior (Lafferty et al., 2005; Ohanian, 1990). However, our findings suggest that it is possible that the effect of endorser attractiveness on purchase intention was attenuated by the presence of other variables that exerted a stronger impact. For example, the perceived credibility of the endorser, the degree of celebrity-product match-up, and the perceived quality of the brand may be more important determinants of purchase intention than attractiveness alone.

The hypothesis of this study states that the consumer's intention to purchase may be

affected by the physical appeal of BL actors, who are renowned for their attractive, well-groomed appearances and flawless skin. Nevertheless, the data collected during this research failed to support this hypothesis. These results could be partially clarified by the common practice of using attractive celebrities in advertisements, which may cause respondents to have a mindset to de-emphasize the importance of attractiveness when making decisions about which brands to choose (Ohanian, 1991). Furthermore, the effect of endorser attractiveness on purchase intention may be mediated by other variables, such as credibility or perceived expertise. Physical attractiveness may indirectly influence purchase intention by enhancing the endorser's perceived credibility or expertise, which in turn may have a stronger impact on purchase intention than physical attractiveness alone.

VI. Managerial Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for brands and marketers considering the use of celebrity endorsement strategies in the beauty industry. The findings of this research indicate that businesses are striving to capture consumers' attention through advertising in today's crowded marketplace. In order to differentiate themselves from competitors, marketers must develop effective strategies. Celebrity endorsements, specifically those utilizing reverse gender endorsements (e.g., male endorsers promoting female make-up products), may prove to be a successful marketing tactic in attracting consumer attention and increasing their purchase intention. It is important to note that selecting an appropriate endorser should not solely depend on their fame. From a theoretical perspective, this study fills a research gap by exploring the effects of BL celebrity endorsement on the beauty industry and the factors that influence consumer purchase intentions. At the same time, a practical perspective provides insights for brands and marketers in their celebrity endorsement strategies.

The study can help brands and marketers understand the potential benefits and risks of using BL celebrity endorsers in their beauty product commercials. Therefore, by understanding the factors influencing consumers' purchase intentions, marketers can modify their celebrity endorsement campaigns to effectively target the Gen Z consumer base in Thailand. Rather than focusing solely on the physical attractiveness of the endorser, businesses should prioritize the endorser's credibility and the match-up between the endorser and the product being promoted. Companies should also focus on creating high-quality products that are likely to appeal to consumers based on their perceived value and benefits. In summary, the study paves the way for insights into the growing phenomenon of BL celebrity endorsement and its potential as a marketing strategy for brands targeting female consumers in Southeast Asia.

VII. Limitations & Future Research

As with all studies, this research is not without limitations. In this research, only one demographic group (female Generation Z Thai consumers) and a specific industry is studied. Also, this study focuses on the impact of BL celebrity endorsement on consumers' purchase intentions but did not measure the actual purchasing behavior. Other potential factors that affect consumer purchase decisions can also be included to observed in the future to provide further insights for brands and marketers looking to effectively engage with the Gen Z consumer base in Thailand. In this research, we did not test for the effects of control variables, mainly because the participants were already narrowed down to the target market of BL reverse gender endorsement, Gen Z female consumers. Therefore, we believe that testing for generic demographic variables such as gender, age or education was not extremely necessary. However, we suggest that for future research, other factors such as frequency of watching BL drama could be included as a control variable. Future research could increase the sample size and examining the effects of BL celebrity endorsement on purchase intention among a broader demographic, including males and different age groups. With the growing popularity of BL in other Asian regions such as Japan, Korea, and China, future comparative studies on cultural norm, LGBTQ acceptance and other relevant factors which may influence celebrity endorsement of male model or actors and consumer purchase intention can also further shed light on this topic. In addition, examining the effects of long-term exposure to BL celebrity endorsement on purchase intention and consumer behavior would offer valuable insights into the long-term impact of celebrity endorsement strategies on consumer behavior and brand loyalty.

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APPENDIX A- ENGLISH QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1 Demographics

1. Age

- Below 18
- 18 - 25
- 26 or above

2. Level of Education

- High School
- Bachelor Degree
- Master Degree or higher

3. Country of Residence

- Thailand
- Other

Proposed commercial ads for evaluation:

I AM WHO EYE AM กับ Hypercurl แบบซongใหม่

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odY3JOAFQ-c>)

Section 2 Endorser Attractiveness

1. I think the BL endorser is attractive.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

2. I think the BL endorser is classy.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

3. I think the endorser is elegant.

1 2 3 4
5

Strongly Disagree ● ● ● ● Strongly Agree

4. I think the BL endorser is presentable.

Strongly Disagree ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 4 Strongly Agree
5

Celebrity Credibility

5. I buy the product because it is endorsed by a trustworthy BL celebrity.

Strongly Disagree ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 4 Strongly Agree
5

6. I will stop buying the product if it is endorsed by a BL celebrity involved in a scandal.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ● ● ● 5 ● Strongly Agree

7. The BL celebrity who is an expert makes the product more attractive.

Strongly Disagree ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 4 Strongly Agree
5

8. I buy the product because the BL celebrity had a pleasant experience from it.

Strongly Disagree ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 4 Strongly Agree
5

9. I buy the product because the BL celebrity has enough knowledge of the product.

Strongly Disagree ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 4 Strongly Agree
5

Product Match-up

10. Product Match-up between the Product and BL celebrity influence my purchase decision.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ● ● ● 5 ● Strongly Agree

11. I believe BL celebrities use the product they have endorsed.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

12. The alignment between endorsers' field and product attributes stimulate my purchase intentions.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Perceived Quality

13. Brand endorsed by BL celebrities are of high quality.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

14. Cosmetic brands endorsed by BL celebrities are of consistent quality.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

15. Cosmetic brands endorsed by BL celebrities offer excellent features.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

16. Cosmetic brands endorsed by BL celebrities are reliable.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Purchase Intention

17. Cosmetic brands endorsed by BL celebrities draw my attention.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

18. Cosmetic brands endorsed by BL celebrities influence my purchase decision.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

19. If my favorite celebrity endorses a brand, I will buy it.

1 2 3 4
5

Strongly Disagree ● ● ● ● ● Strongly Agree

20. I buy a brand because I like the personality of the celebrity endorser.

Strongly Disagree ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 Strongly Agree
5

21. I feel happy in buying a brand endorsed by a famous celebrity.

Strongly Disagree ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 Strongly Agree
5