The existence Value of Brand Ambassadors: A Perspective Study on Chinese Consumers

*Eyden Samunderu – International School of Management (ISM), Dortmund, Germany | email: eyden.samunderu@ism.de
Yifan Xiang - International School of Management, Hangzhou, China | email: Yifan.xiang.personal@gmail.com

| Aim/Purpose | This study aims to verify the existence of a significant perception difference between two consumer groups in China towards the use of celebrity endorsement. |
| Background | Through an online questionnaire survey investigating 212 consumers across the Chinese market, this study found that there is no significant difference between these two groups’ perceptions towards celebrity endorsement, indicating an advanced way of understanding media coverage and public opinions in the Chinese market. |
| Methodology | To better find out the perceptions of the newly targeted young consumers and the already existing middle-class customer base, it was necessary to collect quantitative data expressed in numbers. This was appropriate to cover a large number of samples across different areas in the Chinese market, and generalized knowledge could be achieved based on this. Primary data were collected by the author of this study through a self-administered online survey, in which every participant answered the questions without any intervention from the researcher from the beginning to the end. |
| Findings | The non-existence of significant difference of the perceptions between premium brands’ newly targeted consumers, the young consumer group, and their already existing consumers, the middle-class consumer group, towards young entertainment star’s endorsement clearly answered the first research question, and, meanwhile, filled the research gap found and explained in the literature review. |
| Impact on Society | This research demonstrated that the BMW China’s way of hiring a young entertainment star was actually winning on both sides. This celebrity endorsement successfully helped to attract young consumers’ attention and increased the brand exposure. |
| Keywords | Brand management, brand equity, celebrity endorsement, social media marketing |

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### Areas of Contribution

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<td>☒ Basic</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Economics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Human Elements Addressed

| ☐ Personality Traits       | ☐ Development                                 | ☒ Mental Wellbeing                        |
| ☒ Behaviour                | ☐ Environmental                               | ☒ Consciousness                           |
| ☐ Cognition                | ☒ Social                                     | ☒ Physical Wellbeing                      |
INTRODUCTION

With a rapid development of mobile internet and the 5G technology in the past 5-8 years, almost everything in China is currently closely connected to internet and online traffic. According to the latest published 47th China Internet Development Statistical Report (China Internet Network Information Center, 2021), China has 989 million internet users, 99.7% of them use mobile internet and 86.4% use mobile payments. Premium brands’ sales, brand management and social media marketing are not exceptional. They are now a part of the online mobile business, delivering brand messages through social media platforms, establishing brand image with social media users, promoting products across various online channels, selling goods and services, and fulfilling post-sales responsibilities on mobile applications. Verifying the media coverage’s reliability for business operation in China and understanding the effectiveness of English literature’s application in the Chinese market are not only beneficial for the branding and marketing practitioners but also filling academic research gaps in brand management, social media marketing and consumer analysis fields.

The study aims to provide the marketing and branding practitioners working for premium brands with an insightful understanding of their customers’ and potential customers’ perceptions of a brand’s celebrity endorsement and a statistic verification of the existence of a significant perception’s difference on this topic in the Chinese market. The data collection methods were designed under this framework, and the core sampling criterion was set as age. After sending more than 300 copies of the questionnaire on the WJ platform, 212 valid responses were kept. Computer software such as Excel, SPSS and SPSS Amos were utilised to prepare the collected data.

On top of the demographic difference analysis, it was proved that there was no significant perception’s difference towards the entertainment celebrity’s premium brand endorsement between the young consumer group and the middle-class consumer group. This conclusion was drawn through an Independent-Samples T-Test with the analysis of the collected data in SPSS. Meanwhile, combining the results and findings of the correlation analysis and the influence factor analysis, in the brand management and social media marketing fields, brands’ engagement with consumers in their childhood was positively related to brand equity and purchase intention. However, when the scenarios had connections with IT and specific and subtle mindset, the application effectiveness was very limited. Not only the younger generation but also the aged middle-class consumers proved this. As a result, their perception towards celebrity’s over-
endorsement, which was usually presented in an information explosion way in China, was not in line with the academic findings in the West.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**BRAND EQUITY**

A highly accepted definition of brand equity refers to an added value a brand generates from its products or services compared to generic equivalents (Wood, 2000). Brand association contains all experiences, feelings and attitudes that are connected to the brand in consumers’ memory (Kotler et al., 2019). This is a fundamental element for brand loyalty establishment and purchase decision making (Aaker, 1991). Brand loyalty can be considered as an emotional connection consumers have with brands (Loureiro et al., 2012), which could be further examined from behaviour loyalty and cognition loyalty (Grassl, 2000). Behaviour loyalty involves repeat purchase times and cognition loyalty engages recall ranking in consumers’ minds (Keller and Swaminathan, 2020). As a result, based on the above discussed brand image and brand equity parts, this study firstly hypothesises that:

**H1:** The perceptions of brand image and brand equity are positively related to purchase intention.

**BRAND ENGAGEMENT**

How brand and customers engaging with each other is a well-studied and documented topic, suggesting several models focusing on various relationships between the two parties (Kaltcheva et al., 2014). A highly cited model concludes this relationship as cognition, affect and behaviour, which, respectively represent “attention and absorption”, “enjoyment and enthusiasm” and “learning, endorsing and sharing” (Dessart et al., 2015). Instead of the traditional engagement of brand-customer individual interactions, customers started to interact with each other and with brands at the same time on social media platforms (Simon et al., 2016; Tafesse, 2016). Digital customer communities are established across various online platforms (Taute and Sierra, 2014). Brands’ customers use these to find similar people, sharing with each other about their feelings towards brands (Kaufmann et al., 2016) and showing their attitudes and differences to those who are not likeminded (Palazon et al., 2015; Ruane and Wallace, 2015). Thus, this study hypothesises:

**H2:** Engagement with consumers in their childhood is positively related to brand equity and purchase intention.
**Celebrity Endorsement in China**

Dominated by the Confucius culture and mindset, Chinese people value more on collectivism (Hung et al., 2007) and Chinese consumers’ behaviour are tending to be risk averse (Mooij, 2019). Ilicic and Webster (2011) reveal that the entertainment-based consumers’ purchase intention is enhanced seeing celebrity’s multiple endorsements, while the intense attachment in consumers’ purchase intention is decreased. Thus, this research hypothesises that:

**H3:** Celebrity’s over-endorsement is not positively related to the purchasing intention.

**Research Gaps to Fill**

With the overload information on social media, the efficiency of information obtainment, the helpfulness of acquired information and the feeling of searching information are all affected (Bright et al., 2015). However, these findings are based on Western contexts and from the scholars in Information Technology field. Thus, to better fill the identified research gap in the Chinese market, this study hypothesises:

**H4:** Information overload on a brand’s social media account is negatively related to the perceptions of brand image and brand equity.

In addition, it seems that there is no existing literature studying the difference of perceptions between the premium brands’ new targeting group, the young consumer group, and the middle-class group towards young celebrities’ endorsement. This study tries to fill the research gap from the Chinese market’s point of view. To answer this question and fill this research gap, this research sets the hypothesis as:

**H5:** There is no significant difference between the Chinese young consumer group and the Chinese middle-class consumer group on their perceptions towards BMW’s Jackson Yee endorsement.

**Methodology and Data Collection**

Through qualitative research-based in-depth interviews, non-numerical data covering new marketing trends, social media marketing concepts, and consumers’ detailed opinions, marketing specialists’ experiences are interviewed, collected and analysed, and insights of new market phenomenon and new directions for further research are generated (Fearon and Laitin, 2013). Quantitative research methods are more widely used to discover general characteristics of a
group of people, and understandings can be generated from collected numerical data (McCusker and Gunaydin, 2015). Primary data were collected by the author of this study through a self-administered online survey, in which every participant answered the questions without any intervention from the researcher from the beginning to the end (Lavrakas, 2008).

**QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN**

**Operationalized concepts**

As branding effect was too broad and unclear to get suitable measurement, this core concept could be divided into multiple sub-concepts (See Table 1). Based on these, corresponding variables can be defined and indicators of the variables can be explained. Formed on the review of existing literature, brand image, brand exposure, brand’s marketing performance, brand engagement, celebrity endorsement, social media marketing and social media information were identified as sub-concepts, which could be translated into several operational variables that were easier to scale. Considering young consumer groups was one of the most important part of this research as the middle-class respondents were coming from diversified backgrounds, this study adopted the Likert scaling method with 5-point scales to minimise misunderstanding and make the survey easy to begin with. In the format of forced-choice, answering options ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. 1 indicated strongly agree, 3 for neutral and 5 indicated strongly disagree.

**Variables to be measured**

Based on former reviewed literature, it is widely agreed that the quality of brand image perception is one of the key indicators for branding effect evaluation (Anselmsson et al., 2014; Cretu and Brodie, 2007; Esch et al., 2006; Faircloth et al., 2001). As for brand’s marketing performance, this could be evaluated from two angles: the frequency of brand exposure under the marketing performance (Aaker, 1991; Kotler et al., 2019; Washburn and Plank, 2002) and the quality of marketing performance perceived by consumers (Dodds et al., 1991; Symmank, 2019). The engagement time with customers or potential customers (Baxter et al., 2015; Iyer et al., 2016; Rodhain and Aurier, 2016) is the first variable for brand engagement. The product type used to initiate the engagement (Fetscherin et al., 2014) is the second, and the result of brand engagement (Taute and Sierra, 2014) is the third variable that can be utilised to measure. Celebrity endorsement is another well-researched theme, and its contribution to measure branding effect could be assessed from four variables. Celebrity endorsement’s connection with brand awareness and brand association (Keller, 1993; Tzoumaka et al., 2016; Zipporah and Mberia, 2014), celebrity’s congru-
ency with the brand (Choi and Rifon, 2012; Friedman and Friedman, 1979; Kamins and Gupta, 1994; Roy, 2012), celebrity’s preference perceived by targeting consumer groups (Hung et al., 2011; Ilicic and Webster, 2011; Kapitan and Silvera, 2016) and the amount of celebrity’s endorsements (Ilicic and Webster, 2011). The perceived quality of social media marketing, including its effects on brand image and online purchasing environment could be employed as measurable variables. Meanwhile, the amount of generated information and the perceived quality of this information can be applied as the variable for social media information concept.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Detailed explanation of sub-concepts and variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Core Concept</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branding Effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

**SAMPLING METHOD**

The main population from whom the conclusions were drawn were young Chinese consumers and Chinese middle-class consumers. Considering the normal graduation age of a Bachelor’s degree was 22 and most of the graduates preferred to extend their studies for another 3-year Master’s program in China, the upper limit of young Chinese consumers was set to 25 years old. In cases where the participants were younger than 25 but were employed, they were classified into the young consumer group as well. Anyone else older than 25 was categorised into the middle-class consumer group as long as their monthly income was more than RMB 5,000. The Chinese National Bureau of Statistics set the middle-class monthly income range between RMB 2,000 (USD 295) to
RMB 5,000 (USD 740), which was much lower than the thresholds used by international financial firms like UBS and PWC when they reported their Chinese market information (China Briefing, 2019). This study employed RMB 5,000 monthly as the threshold of middle-class participants.

**Samples**

It seemed that at least 100 participants were required to answer questionnaire in regard to the perception’s research of celebrity endorsement in general (Chow et al., 2018; Yu and Hu, 2020), although some research employed around 300 respondents (Chu et al., 2013) and there was a research which used more than 1000 (Hung et al., 2011). The online questionnaire survey was conducted on WJ platform (https://wj.qq.com/) in Chinese language in China at the beginning of March 2021. The survey was set to receive at least 200 responses from two targeted groups of consumers (100 responses each group) across China in a week’s time. After sending 368 copies, 234 of them received responses. The response rate was 63%. The main body of the survey consisted of 4 background information questions and 16 questions that were measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

**The Methods of Data Analysis**

To ensure that the data was collected based on the pre-defined standards with no bias; the author picked randomly 20 samples from each consumer group, and looked into the exact answers the respondents gave. In the entire 234 participants that responded to the questionnaire survey, 52% of them were female (Refer Table 5). This was consistent with the reality of entertainment star followers’ gender distribution in China, as it was widely agreed that entertainment stars’ female followers were more than male followers (Sina Entertainment, 2021). Quantitative research targeting marketing activities and consumer behaviours was empowered by SPSS to discover hidden connections and underlying meanings under complex numbers. IBM SPSS Amos works as separate software, but co-ordinates closely with SPSS as a functional extension. In this research, Amos helped to establish a structural equation model that was used to solve multivariate statistical problems and display the complex connections between data sets in a clearly graphical way. It also analysed the validity of the survey and the collected data with details.

**Analysis of Collected Data**

The questionnaire survey of this study covered 25 of the entire 34 provincial areas in China, ranging from the eastern coastal areas to the western inland regions. This broad coverage provided rich consumer information varying from the rich markets (such as Beijing, Shanghai, Zhejiang and Guangdong) to the
less-developed markets (such as Shanxi, Hebei and Heilongjiang). This was because the Chinese northern and southern consumers’ consumption habits, income levels, perceptions of premium brands and entertainment celebrities differentiated more or less with each other. The gender bias of the participants surveyed was very slight in this research. There were 110 females and 102 males among the total 212 participants in the research. The survey emphasised the participants from the 18-25 age group. In the questionnaire survey, 103 participants came from this group. Meanwhile, to better understand the potential influence of premium brands’ strategic changes in marketing and branding on their already owning customer group, 109 participants whose ages were older than 25 and earned more than average income were categorised into the opposite group. In total, each group contributed around 50% of the entire population in this research. In the entire questionnaire, 16 questions were scale-related, and they were tested with Cronbach’s Alpha factor about their reliability. The entire questionnaire’s reliability in general was 0.823, and each dimension’s reliability was 0.882, 0.922, 0.863 and 0.791, respectively (See Table 2). All of them were larger than 0.7, which indicated that either the entire reliability or the separate dimensions’ reliabilities were acceptable statistically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st: Purchase Intention</td>
<td>0.882</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd: Social Media Marketing</td>
<td>0.922</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd: Brand Engagement</td>
<td>0.863</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th: Brand Equity and Brand Image</td>
<td>0.791</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entire questionnaire</td>
<td>0.823</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dimensional Answers**

Since basic sample distribution was explained and the reliability and validity of this research was confirmed, the meaning of the collected data could be further analysed. Based on the four dimensions identified above, Separate Dimensions’ Reliability part and the corresponding raw data collected in each dimension’s questions, each dimension’s dimensional questionnaire score could be calculated as following:

\[ D1 = \frac{(Q5 + Q13 + Q14 + Q15 + Q16)}{5} \]
\[ D2 = \frac{(Q_{12} + Q_{17} + Q_{18} + Q_{19})}{4} \]

\[ D3 = \frac{(Q_{9} + Q_{10} + Q_{11})}{3} \]

\[ D4 = \frac{(Q_{6} + Q_{7} + Q_{8})}{3} \]

Table 3: Four dimensions’ mean and deviation values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Situation Analysis</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.4585</td>
<td>1.14187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.5330</td>
<td>1.09451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.8428</td>
<td>1.03362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D4</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.8821</td>
<td>.92717</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valid N (listwise) 212

Table 4: Independent-Samples T-Test between the age aspect and research dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Samples Test</th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1 Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1 Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2 Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Gender

Since there were only two variables, male and female, in this demographic aspect, this part’s analysis was also conducted with the Independent-Samples T-Test in SPSS. Gender was set as Grouping Variable, and Dimension No. 1, 2, 3, 4 and all dimensions together (DA) were set as Test Variables (Refer Table 5). As all the five 2-tailed significances of t-test for Equality of Means were larger than 0.05, the conclusion could be made that there was no significant difference in gender either in the four dimensions or in general.
Table 5: Gender difference analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>209.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.60</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>208.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>-1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-1.46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>209.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.62</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Occupation**

As occupation had more than three variables, this aspect of the demographic difference was analysed with the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) method. In the One-way ANOVA analysis, the significance of each factor should be lower than 0.05 if significant difference was confirmed (Gastwirth et al., 2009). In this case, occupation was set as Factor, and Dimension No. 1, 2, 3, 4 and all dimensions together (DA) were set as Dependent List. The result of this analysis could be seen from the below Table 6. The five significances (see in bold numbers) were 0.159, 0.532, 0.545, 0.308 and 0.292, respectively. They were all larger than 0.05, indicating the occupation aspect did not have significant difference either in the four dimensions or in general.

**Table 6: One-way ANOVA of the occupation aspect**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>8.584</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.146</td>
<td>1.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>266.531</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>1.288</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>275.115</td>
<td>211</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3.808</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.952</td>
<td>.792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>248.961</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>1.203</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>252.769</td>
<td>211</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3.311</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.828</td>
<td>.771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>222.115</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>1.073</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>225.426</td>
<td>211</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**INCOME**

Similar to the Occupation part, income aspect had more than 3 variables. Thus, same method and threshold were applied. Seen form the below Table 7, all the five significances (see in bold numbers) were larger than 0.05, indicating the income aspect had no significant difference in the four dimensions or in general.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7: One-way ANOVA of the income aspect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANOVA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Squares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1  Between Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2  Between Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3  Between Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D4  Between Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>DA  Between Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CORRELATION ANALYSIS**

When the relation between the demographic factors and the dimensions was analysed, the relation between dimensions themselves could be further investigated. This correlation analysis was conducted through Pearson’s correlation
coefficient analysis in SPSS, as the purpose was to measure the linear relationship between two continuous variables with the assumption that variables in the Likert scale questionnaire was normally distributed (Hurst et al., 2007). In Pearson’s correlation coefficient analysis, two variables could be considered as significantly correlated if the significance value was lower than 0.05, and the Pearson Correlation value indicated the direction and degree of the correlation (Cohen, 2003).

In this case, all four dimensions and the entity combining all dimensions together (DA) were set as the Variables in SPSS, and the result could be seen from the below table (Table 8). All four dimensions were positively correlated with the questionnaire, as every single dimension’s 2-tailed significance value with the entity combining all dimensions together (DA) was 0.000. Besides, the corresponding Person Correlation values were all positive, proving the positive correlation between the four dimensions and the questionnaire. Moreover, it existed another significantly positive correlation between Dimension No. 2 and Dimension No. 4, because their 2-tailed significance value was 0.000, and their Pearson Correlation value was 0.587. As for the rest correlations between the dimensions, they were not significantly correlated, but positively related. This was because that the other significant values were all larger than 0.05, but, meanwhile, the other values of the Pearson Correlation were all positive. Thus, the directions of their relationships were positive. Therefore, the correlation relationships in the questionnaire could be summarised as:

1. Every dimension was significantly positively related to the questionnaire
2. The 2nd Dimension and the 4th Dimension were significantly positively related with each other.
3. Other dimensions did not have significant correlations with each other, but they were positively related.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>D1</th>
<th>D2</th>
<th>D3</th>
<th>D4</th>
<th>DA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>D1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>.673**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.287</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>.587**</td>
<td>.691**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Correlation analysis between different dimensions
Since the demographic difference analysis conducted had already shown the absence of significant connection between the age aspect and all four dimensions, the influence factor analysis for the age aspect was not necessary. However, considering the research’s rigorousness and the integrity on statistics, a more detailed influential relationship analysis was still conducted through a Linear Regression analysis in SPSS. Age was set as the Dependent, and four dimensions were all set as Independents. The final result can be seen below in Table 9. As the R Square was 0.013, only 1.3% of the variance of the Dependent Variable, Age, can be explained by the Independent Variables, the four dimensions. This indicated a none or very weak degree of influence (Moore et al., 2018). Normally the value of R Square, also called the coefficient of determination, should be more than 30% if the influential degree was considered as acceptable (Zikmund, 1999).

**Influence Factor Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>D3</th>
<th>D4</th>
<th>DA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>.673**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>.587**</td>
<td>.691**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.448**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>.596**</td>
<td>.596**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td>.000</td>
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<td>212</td>
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<td></td>
<td>212</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

### Table 9: Linear Regression analysis of the age and four dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Summary&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Predictors: (Constant), D4, D3, D1, D2

<sup>b</sup> Dependent Variable: What is your age?
In addition, seen from the above Coefficients Analysis Table (Table 10), the exact significances between every dimension and the age aspect can be achieved. All four significances were larger than 0.05, showing no significant influential power in all four dimensions. Meanwhile, as the values of the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) were all less than 3, there did not exist multicollinearity in this analysis (Kock and Lynn, 2012). This suggested a precision of the estimated coefficients and a reliability of the analysis results.

Table 10: Coefficient Analysis between the Age and the four dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Collinearity Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B Std. Error Beta</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tolerance VIF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.606 0.314 0.041 8.298 0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D1 0.027 0.046 0.041 0.582 0.561 0.979 1.021</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D2 0.088 0.059 0.128 1.488 0.138 0.644 1.553</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D3 -0.034 0.051 -0.046 -0.662 0.509 0.979 1.021</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D4 -0.061 0.069 -0.076 -0.887 0.376 0.650 1.537</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: What is your age?

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

**THE RESULTS OF HYPOTHESES**

Based on the analysis of collected data and statistics tests conducted, the result was clear that three of the five hypotheses could be supported, another one hypothesis should be rejected, and the rest hypothesis cannot be supported or rejected. A detailed explanation of the five hypotheses could be seen below:

*H1: The perceptions of brand image and brand equity are positively related to purchase intention.*

According to the result of correlation analysis conducted in earlier part of the paper, Hypothesis 1 can be well supported. The correlation significance value between the 4th dimension and the 1st dimension was 0.083, which was larger than the normally adopted threshold 0.05. Thus, their correlation could not be
considered as significant. However, as these two dimensions’ Pearson Correlation factor was 0.119 (see the italic and bold number in Table 8 under Correlation Analysis), their relationship can be confirmed as positive. As a result, Hypothesis 1 should be supported, and the perceptions of brand image and brand equity are positively related to purchase intention.

**H2: Engagement with consumers in their childhood is positively related to brand equity and purchase intention.**

As the 3rd Dimension, the Hypothesis 2 was actually examining the relationship between the 3rd Dimension and the 4th and the 1st Dimensions. Based to the correlation analysis conducted, the significance value of D3 and D4 was larger than 0.05 but their Pearson Correlation factor was 0.34. Also, the significance value of D3 and D1 was greater than 0.05 but their Pearson Correlation factor was 0.73. Thus, the relationship between brand engagement and brand equity, and the relationship between brand engagement and purchase intention were both insignificant but positive. Hypothesis 2 should be supported.

**H3: Celebrity’s over-endorsement is not positively related to the purchasing intention.**

Since there was no overwhelming side of the responses to the questions, this hypothesis cannot be supported or rejected. In the 212 surveyed Chinese consumers’ opinion, celebrities’ over-endorsement was neither positively nor negatively related to their purchase intention.

**H4: Information overload on a brand’s social media account is negatively related to the perceptions of brand image and brand equity.**

Hypothesis 4 could also be explained through the analysis like Hypothesis 3. More than a half (58.9%) of the responses to this question were on the negative side and around 20% (21.2%) were on the positive side.

**H5: There is no significant difference between the Chinese young consumer group and the Chinese middle-class consumer group on their perceptions towards BMW’s Jackson Yee endorsement.**

Based on the demographic analysis of collected data, Hypothesis 5 be supported. All five significance values of the four dimensions and the entire questionnaire were larger than 0.05, pointing out the absence of significant difference for the age aspect either in the four dimensions or in general. Thus, there was no existence of a significant difference of the perceptions between the young consumer group and the middle-class group in regards to premium brands’ young entertainment star endorsement in the Chinese market. BMW China’s
latest brand management move, signing its first ever 19-year-old brand ambassador, was perceived by its targeting young consumers and it is already owning customers in the Chinese market with no significant difference.

**CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

**CONCLUSION**
Starting from BMW’s announcement of its first ever ambassador in the Chinese market and its accompanying opposite voices in the media coverage, this study raised an issue related to premium brands’ brand management and social media marketing in the Chinese market. That was the so-called conflict between sliding to the internet traffic with the usage of celebrities’ strong internet exposure and maintaining original brand image and value proposition with relatively conservative and traditional ways of branding and marketing. Even though major public opinion seemed agreeing with the existence of this conflict based on media reports, the author doubted it or at least its practical significance in the real business world. Thus, the first aim of this study was set as determining the existence of a significant perception’s difference towards a young entertainment celebrity’s brand endorsement between premium brands’ newly-targeted consumers, the young consumer group, and their already existent customers, the middle-class consumers.

This research’s main goal was to answer two questions: 1, if there exists a significant difference of the perceptions between premium brands’ newly-targeted consumers, the young consumer group, and their already existent consumers, the middle-class consumer group, towards young entertainment star’s endorsement issues. 2, is the academic experience in the brand management and social media marketing fields from the existing literature in the English world applicable to understand and analyse consumers in the Chinese market in the mobile and digital era. The study demonstrates no significant difference of the perceptions between the two consumer groups towards this celebrity endorsement issue. The analysis supports the theories that the perceptions of brand image and brand equity are positively related to purchase intention, and engagement with consumers in their childhood is positively related to brand equity and purchase intention. Meanwhile, the data suggests that information overload on a brand’s social media account is not negatively related to the perceptions of brand image and brand equity. Moreover, the results indicate that celebrities’ over-endorsement relationship with the purchase intention is neither negative nor positive.
**Practical Implications**

With this research’s results, BMW China’s strategic move of adopting this celebrity endorsement was proved to be right. By re-positioning its brand among the younger generation and creating a new potential customer base, BMW China did not lose its already existing middle-class consumers. Even though it seemed the other way on newspapers or in media reports, this research’s findings supported BMW’s business move. Thus, considering research conducted in a specific market, or at least in the Chinese market, as a start of developing new and updated understanding of this market is more realistic and applicable. After 10 years in a mobile digital world is long enough for the development and change of consumers’ mindset.

This celebrity endorsement successfully helped to attract young consumers’ attention and increased the brand’s exposure. But, in the meantime, this did not push the existing middle-class customers away. Premium brands operating in the Chinese market could refer to this strategy and utilise the rich resource of young entertainment celebrities as their way to increase brand exposure and seize the internet traffic trend. Doing business in China necessarily requires a fundamental understanding of the media and the public relations, but the research’s findings revealed that purely understanding words, general ideas and main directions of the media reports may be misleading. Combining with public opinions in a deeper level and mega societal trends, the understandings could be further enhanced, and the capture of the market and consumers’ perceptions might be more accurate.

**Limitations and Future Research**

Even though the mathematical requirement of the respondents’ numbers was fulfilled to ensure the reliability of the statistic tests, 212 participants representing the huge Chinese market’s population and the population’s idea seemed not optimal. In addition, considering the money incentives, the red pockets, utilised in attracting respondents of the questionnaire survey, a few careless respondents may ruin an entire sub-market’s perception studied in this research. Also, even given the statistic reliability and validity were confirmed in this research, the totally brand-new questionnaire with a newly created set of questions may still not effective and efficient enough in discovering perceptions of the participants with various backgrounds in a logical sequence. Question ideas coming from the English literature and translated back to Chinese made this discovery process more challenging, as fully expressing the ideas from the English academic articles in a way various levels of Chinese consumers can understand required not only language skills but also an advanced level of cultural understanding and semantic presentation capability. Although it was beyond the
scope of this study, the author of this article tried his best in translating but still found space to further improve.

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**AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY**

Dr. Eyden Samunderu (PhD) is a Professor at the International School of Management (ISM) Dortmund in Germany. His key research interest includes strategic management, consumer behavior and strategic brand management.

Yifan Xiang (MA International Business) is an entrepreneur based in China. His research interest includes Digital Marketing, Branding and consumer behavior.