

The Influence of Product Attributes on Young Consumers' Purchase Decision of Makeups among Malaysian: The Mediating Effects of Perceived Brand Image, CEO's Image, and Quality

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Abstract

In recent years, the young generation has developing an interest in makeups. Makeups are not only just a popular trend but have a meaningful impact particularly in boosting their self-esteem, self-confidence, and personality. The purpose of this study is (1) to examine the influence of product attributes on young consumer purchase decision; (2) to examine the influence of product attributes on perceived brand image, perceived CEO's image and perceived quality, (3) to examine the influence of perceived brand image, perceived CEO's image and perceived quality on young consumer purchase decision and (4) to examine the mediating effects of perceived brand image, perceived CEO's image and perceived quality in the relationship between product attributes and young consumer purchase decision of makeups among Malaysian. A total of 475 useable surveys (69.75% response rate) and data was collected using a self-administered survey in a shopping mall in Klang Valley, Kuala Lumpur. Store-intercept technique was used to determine the sample, and the instrument adapted from the prior studies based on seven-point Likert-scale. Covariance Based-Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) technique was employed. The empirical results confirm that product attributes the perceived brand image, perceived CEO's image and perceived quality have significant influences on the young consumer purchase decision. Additionally, the results indicate that there are no mediating effects of the perceived brand image, perceived CEO's image and perceived quality in the relationship of product attributes and the young consumers' purchase decision of makeups. The managerial implications discussed in the context of practical contribution to marketers in the cosmetic industry.

Keywords: Consumer purchase decision, product attributes, perceived brand image, perceived CEO's image, perceived quality

Introduction

Today, the culture of beauty obsession pressured the youngsters to have a certain look and beauty standard, so that the society would not label, judge, or treat them poorly. In a study done by Cash, Dawson, & Davis, 1989, confirmed that facial cosmetics (such as makeups) influenced both self-perceptions and social perceptions. Unlike in the past, beauty ideals is just a moral nature (girlguiding.org.uk). Makeups are not only just a popular trend among women but have a meaningful impact particularly in boosting their self-esteem, self-confidence, and personality temporarily (Cash et al.,1989). Makeups make so appealing and attractive to most women because it can solve beauty problem quicker, more comfortable and cheaper than drastic measures such as diet, exercise or plastic surgery (Beausoleil, 1992; Nash, Fieldman, Hussey, Lévêque, & Pineau, 2006). Therefore, this has led to an interest in buying makeups. Although the cosmetic product sale continued to grow, marketing managers find the difficulties in increasing product usage in the product category. Hence, most firms are shifting their focus to the consumer on their preferred product attributes rather than firms deciding on these (M. & Naidu, 2014). Product attributes create value and motivate the consumer to buy (Walters & Lancaster, 1999). Product cues can be intrinsic (i.e. quality) and extrinsic (i.e. price, packaging, and brand name) (Olson & Jacoby, 1972). Additionally, the product attributes divided into two types; monetary or non-monetary costs (M. & Naidu, 2014). Brand image is an essential extrinsic cue as well as an information cue for consumers to evaluate a product (Chattopadhyay, Shivani, & Krishnan, 2010; Parvin & Chowdhury, 2006). Generally, consumers use the brand image in their product evaluation either in their rational or emotional state of mind. In the first rational way is when the brand image is a construct that consumer use to simplify their product knowledge about a specific brand (Meenaghan,1995). Consumers are often looking for brand's opportunities, suitability, benefit, and prestige when they evaluate a brand (Parvin & Chowdhury, 2006).

Despite the importance of brand image to consumers, they also often associate the brand with the perceived quality of a product as it affects consumers' brand evaluation. Perceived quality refers to the perception of a consumer about the overall excellence and superiority of a brand which is directly related to one satisfaction (Parvin & Chowdhury, 2006). A brand contains quality attributes, but if it does not fit with consumers' perceptions and belief, they will not satisfy and not buying again. Typically, different consumers hold different perceptions of brand quality. They recognized the

quality levels of different brands through their own experience, information and based on product class. Later, consumers form positive or negative perceptions about the quality of a specific brand. Therefore, consumers tend to code a brand quality as high, medium and low quality (Parvin & Chowdhury, 2006). In today's corporate world, media, stakeholders or consumers are interested to know more about an organization including management's decision, corporate social responsibility, CEOs' leadership styles, visions and their personal life (Chih, Lin, Chen, & Chou, 2009; Dragon International, 1991; Halford & Hsu, 2014; Lee, 2012; Leslie Gaines-Ross, 2000; Page & Fearn, 2005; D.-J. Park & Berger, 2004). In Malaysia, there are many famous CEOs or founders in various industries including CEOs in the cosmetic industry. The popularity is due to their frequent exposure on TV, promoting their products or services. Having the fact that TV ads cater to more extensive coverage of the audience, it contributes to their popularity indirectly. These prominent CEOs or founders also have a large number of followers on social media platforms. It shows that people are not only attracted to their business but also their personal life in general. Since the study involves customer's internal process (perceptions), as well as stimulus and action, the most appropriate underpinning theory for this research is Stimulus-Organism-Response Model (SOR Model) which initially developed upon classical Stimulus-Response Theory. This theory explains individuals' behaviours as learned responses to external stimuli (Woodworth, 1929). Based on an extensive literature review, it revealed that there are two issues were found in the literature which this research aims to study; which are first, (1) shortage of empirical studies that have investigated the relationship of the product attributes on perceived brand image, perceived CEO's image and perceived quality (perceptions); and the mediating effect of the perceptions in the relationship between product attributes and consumer purchase decision. Second, (2) inconsistent result of the perceptions of the consumer purchase decision. Therefore, the aims of the study are: (1) to examine the influence of product attributes on young consumer's purchase decision; (2) to examine the influences of product attributes on perceived brand image, perceived CEO's image and perceived quality (perceptions), (3) to examine the influences of perceptions on young consumer's purchase decision, and (4) to examine the mediating effects of perceived brand image, perceived CEO's image and perceived quality (perceptions) in the relationship between product attributes and young consumers' purchase decision of makeups in Malaysia.

Literature Review

This study uses Stimulus-Organism-Response model (SOR model) to demonstrate the overall idea of the conceptual framework of the research as it is the most appropriate theory in explaining the consumer purchase decision of makeups. Consumer a purchase decision influenced by a number of measurements, namely, (1) the measurement of culture which has the most influence and the most extensive in the behaviour of consumers so that marketers need to understand the influence of culture, sub-culture, as well as social class of consumers; (2) social measurement which needs to be considered when designing a marketing strategy because these factors can affect consumer responses; (3) personal measurements which consist of age and stage of life cycle, occupation, economic situation, lifestyle, personality, and self-concept affect the consumer on what is purchased; and (4) psychological measurements which include motivation, perception, learning and beliefs and attitudes also influence the selection of consumer purchases (Assael, 2004; Hawkins, Best, & Coney, 2004). Purchase decisions can be habitual or repetitive due to prolonged experience when a consumer aware of the attributes, advantages, and the perceived value of the products (Mandl et al., 2011). Past studies explained various factors influencing consumer purchase decision and brand choices in several industries settings. It debated that if the primary objective is to analyze purchasing behaviour, an actual brand purchase should be much thorough than the willingness and intention to purchase as it does not represent a severe shortcoming. However, Venkatesh and Davis (2000) strongly justified that there is substantial evidence supporting the existence of a causal link between intention and behaviour. Choo et al. (2004) also stated that intention to buy is a predictor of actual purchase behaviour but only for highly innovative consumers.

Despite considerable amount of researches on intention, current understanding are still at a less than desirable level the translation of the expressed behaviour into actual behaviour should be a matter of further investigation (Cleveland et al. 2012; Kima et al. 2012; B. Kumar et al. 2017; Thogersen et al. 2012). Many global and local cosmetic companies are facing a competitive brand war to obtain a maximum market share. A company can win in the war and maximizes its market share by offering a good quality brand. Through providing the best quality brand, companies can attain a positive brand image with the help of brand positioning such as an advertisement (Durrani et al. 2015). About brand positioning, most companies are always trying to

establish strong consumers' perception. Generally, the positive or negative brand perception could improve or diminish the overall performance of a brand.

It is undeniably true that quality is a fundamental motive for consumers' choice and has a significant relationship on consumer purchase decision of a particular product or service. Perceived quality addressed in several studies in both product and service quality. At this point, it is vital to assess the mediating effect of perception of quality in the relationship between product attributes and consumer purchase decision because it will contribute to the existing literature in the local's setting and helps marketers in strategizing a unique marketing plan. Therefore, more research on quality is needed especially in cosmetic (Krishnan et al. 2017).

In the studies of CEO-related study, most literature were focusing on the management point of view rather than consumer perspective such as CEO personality and firm reputation (Sohn & Lariscy 2015), CEO and firm performance (Brockman et al. 2015; Gaines-Ross 2015; McDonald et al. 2015; Nana et al. 2013; Purkayastha & Gupta 2015; Re & Rule 2016; Resick et al. 2009), CEO branding (Davis 2015; Fetscherin 2015, 2016; Nanton & Dicks 2015), CEO media coverage (Lee 2012; Park & Berger 2004) and appearance predict firm profit (Rule & Ambady 2008). Page & Fearn (2005) suggested that perceived CEO's and firm's image are crucial factors when examining an individual's future consumer behaviour (Assaker et al., 2011; Prayag and Ryan, 2012; Qu et al., 2011). Also, it enables the understanding contribution of leaders appearance's perception in predicting real-world outcomes (Re & Rule 2016). By managing the components of CEO's image efficiently, it will enhance the brand image, brand value, and firm's reputation including CEOs which are further expected to enhance company's market value (M.-K. Kim 2008). However, researchers have not treated perceived CEO's image in much detail in the eyes of consumers. Most of the research only looking at the firm's perspective. Knowing the consumer is an essential and influential stakeholder, a firm should focus on getting new customers and retaining existing consumers. Therefore, this area has some empirical gaps that deserve further investigation in the future (Sohn & Lariscy 2015) either as a predictor or mediating variable.

As a conclusion, two issues found in the literature which this research aims to study; which are first, (1) shortage of empirical research that investigate the relationship of the product attributes on perceived brand image, perceived CEO's image and perceived quality(perceptions); and the mediating effect of the perceptions in the

relationship between product attributes and consumer purchase decision. Second, (2) inconsistent result of the perceptions on a consumer purchase decision.

Conceptual Framework

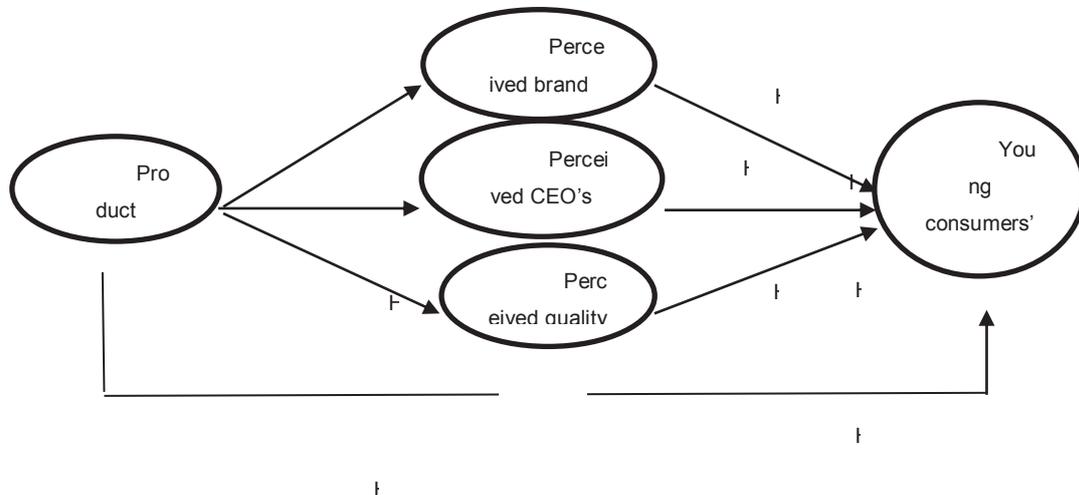


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Procedures and Samples

This study focuses on young adult consumer, aged between 18 to 25 years old as a sampling unit because this particular segment is unique on it on ways in term of their characteristics of spending. They like to spend more money than any other segments (Martin & Turley, 2004; Pokrywczynski & Wolburg, 2001; Rhee & Johnson, 2012). They tend to spend their money as quickly as they get it (Akturan, Tezcan, & Vignolles, 2011), and they tend to influence each other intake up specific trends (Makgosa, 2010). Regarding the selection of the target area of this study, the study determines to cover Klang Valley due to the condition of the socio-economic of the area. About 70 per cent of Malaysian is urban dwellers. Massive job opportunities centred in highly urbanized cities such as Klang Valley (U.S International Trade Administration, 2015). It also fits the time frame and resources of the researchers. Moreover, this population selected because they can provide the most accurate and relevant information about the topic. The potential respondents must have at least purchased makeups product for the past six months in any beauty specialist stores. For this study, the researchers employed non-probability sampling by using store intercept technique/survey because the number of the population is enormous. The researchers do not have a complete listing of the

population. Hence, it would be harder to implement if this research applies to probability sampling. This technique applied by many researchers in the past such as Abril & Rodriguez-cánovas (2016), Beneke & Zimmerman (2014), and Chang et al. (2011). However, this sampling technique cannot be generalized to all the population. To identify the response rate of the survey, the researchers need to examine the questionnaire collected carefully. From the 700 questionnaires distributed, 586 returned, and 476 were usable, representing 67.85 per cent of response rate.

Data Analysis and Results

A simple analysis of demographic profile was done and the result shows that majority of the respondents were female (92.6%) and 7.5% were male. Most of the respondents were Malay (75.6%), and the rest were Chinese, Indian, and Others contributed about 13.3 per cent, 9.1 per cent and 2.1 per cent respectively. Most of them were single (96.2%), still studying and their income was less than RM2,000. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to examine the research model and hypotheses. All the scale were assessed using second-order scales. Each of these unidimensional scales was first subjected to confirmatory factor analysis to demonstrate the underlying factors. All the loadings are more than .68. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were evaluated to test the reliability of the measurement model. The reliability scores of the measurement model shown in Table 1. It shows that all constructs' indices had exceeded the respective common acceptance levels. To check the construct validity, convergent validity and discriminant validity have tested. Both factor loadings and the average variance extracted (AVE) are tested to assure convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Jiang & Li, 2009). Firstly, significant factor loadings that are more than .50 are considered acceptable. The the recommended threshold level of 50% proposed for an acceptable AVE (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The results indicate that all the constructs have exceeded the recommended threshold level (Table 1). The recommended value for discriminant validity, AVE for each construct should be more than the squared correlation of that construct with other constructs (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Jiang & Li, 2009).

Table 1: Instrument Reliability and Composite Reliability

| Construct | Items | Standardized loadings | AVE | Cronbach's α | Composite reliability |
|----------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Consumer Purchase Decision (CPD) | CPD1 | .687 | .574 | .846 | .839 |
| | CPD2 | .693 | | | |
| | CPD3 | .690 | | | |
| | CPD4 | .846 | | | |
| | CPD5 | .718 | | | |
| Product attributes (PA) | Product 6 | .797 | .327 | .892 | .820 |
| | Product 7 | .824 | | | |
| | Product 8 | .717 | | | |
| | Product 9 | .682 | | | |
| | Product 10 | .706 | | | |
| Perceived brand image (PBI) | Brand12 | .929 | .661 | .875 | .828 |
| | Brand13 | .923 | | | |
| | Brand14 | .538 | | | |
| | Brand15 | .842 | | | |
| Perceived quality (PQ) | Quality16 | .879 | .747 | .911 | .799 |
| | Quality17 | .846 | | | |
| | Quality18 | .917 | | | |
| Perceived CEO's image (CEO) | CEO19 | .842 | .678 | .863 | .861 |
| | CEO20 | .784 | | | |
| | CEO21 | .844 | | | |

Table 2 depicts the discriminant validity analysis where the elements on the diagonal of the table are AVEs, and other elements are squared correlation of the constructs and the conditions are met.

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

| | CPD | PA | PBI | PQ | CEO |
|------------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| CPD | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| PA | .825 | 1 | - | - | - |
| PBI | .650 | .686 | 1 | - | - |
| PQ | .621 | .749 | .849 | 1 | - |
| CEO | .399 | .476 | .587 | .564 | 1 |

The result of model-fit indices of the measurement model as tabulated in Table 3 have all exceed the recommended thresholds ($\chi^2/df=1049.701/182$; CFI=.879; RMSEA= .100; GFI=.812). Table 3 demonstrates the analysis results of the structural model. The appendix illustrates the measurement and structural model of the study. The overall result is significant at 95-99%. Thus, this indicates that all hypotheses are supported.

Table 3: Model of Fit Indices

| Model-fit index | Threshold value (Hair et al. 2010) | Measurement model | Structural model |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| GFI | > .90 | .844 | .812 |
| CFI | > .90 | .910 | .879 |
| RMSEA | < .008 | .088 | .100 |
| CMIN (χ^2)/d.f | < 3 | 4.632 | 5.767 |

This study consist of three mediating hypotheses. The structural model produces the indirect effect estimates that indicate whether the mediating effects supported. Based on the mediating test in Table 4, all the three mediators not supported because all the values of the direct effects had more significant value than the total effect of the indirect estimate. However, both direct and indirect effects have a significant p-value. It shows that the type of mediation is partial mediation and no mediation effects. Therefore, H4a, H4b, and H4c not supported. Table 5 tabulates the overview of hypotheses testing. All of the hypotheses are significant and supported.

Table 4: Mediating Test

| Relationship | Standardized (β) | P-value | Result |
|--------------|--------------------------|---|-----------------|
| PA→PBI (a) | .083 | .000 | Significant |
| PBI→CPD (b) | .402 | .009 | Significant |
| PA→CPD (c) | 2.452 | .000 | Significant |
| a*b | .033 | Partial mediation since the direct effect (c) is also significant | |
| a*b < c | No mediation | | |
| Relationship | Standardized (β) | P-value | Result |
| PA→CEO (a) | .079 | .000 | Significant |
| CEO→CPD (b) | .085 | .066 | Not significant |
| PA→CPD (c) | 2.452 | .000 | Significant |
| a*b | .006 | Partial mediation since the direct effect (c) is also significant | |
| Relationship | Standardized (β) | P-value | Result |
| PA→PQ (a) | .082 | .000 | Significant |
| PQ→CPD (b) | .077 | .009 | Significant |
| PA→CPD (c) | 2.452 | .000 | Significant |
| a*b | .006 | Partial mediation since the direct effect (c) is also significant | |

It should be noted that, according to Table 5, all hypothesis were supported (H1: $\beta=2.542$, H2a: $\beta= .083$, H2b: $\beta=.079$ H2c: $\beta=.082$, H3a: $\beta =.402$, H3b: $\beta= .085$ H3c: $\beta=1.815$). Except for H4a, H4b, and H4c, which have no mediating effects, hence, the hypotheses are not supported.

Table 5: Hypotheses Test

| | | | | |
|------------|--|-------|------|---------------|
| H1 | CPD \leftarrow Product attributes | 2.452 | .000 | Supported |
| H2a | Perceived brand image \leftarrow Product attributes | .083 | .000 | Supported |
| H2b | Perceived CEO's image \leftarrow Product attributes | .079 | .000 | Supported |
| H2c | Perceived quality \leftarrow Product attributes | .082 | .000 | Supported |
| H3a | CPD \leftarrow Perceived brand image | .402 | .000 | Supported |
| H3b | CPD \leftarrow Perceived CEO's image | .085 | .000 | Supported |
| H3c | CPD \leftarrow Perceived quality | 1.815 | .009 | Supported |
| H4a | CPD \leftarrow Perceived brand image \leftarrow Product attributes | - | - | Not supported |
| H4b | CPD \leftarrow Perceived CEO's image \leftarrow Product attributes | - | - | Not supported |
| H4c | CPD \leftarrow Perceived quality \leftarrow Product attribute | - | - | Not supported |

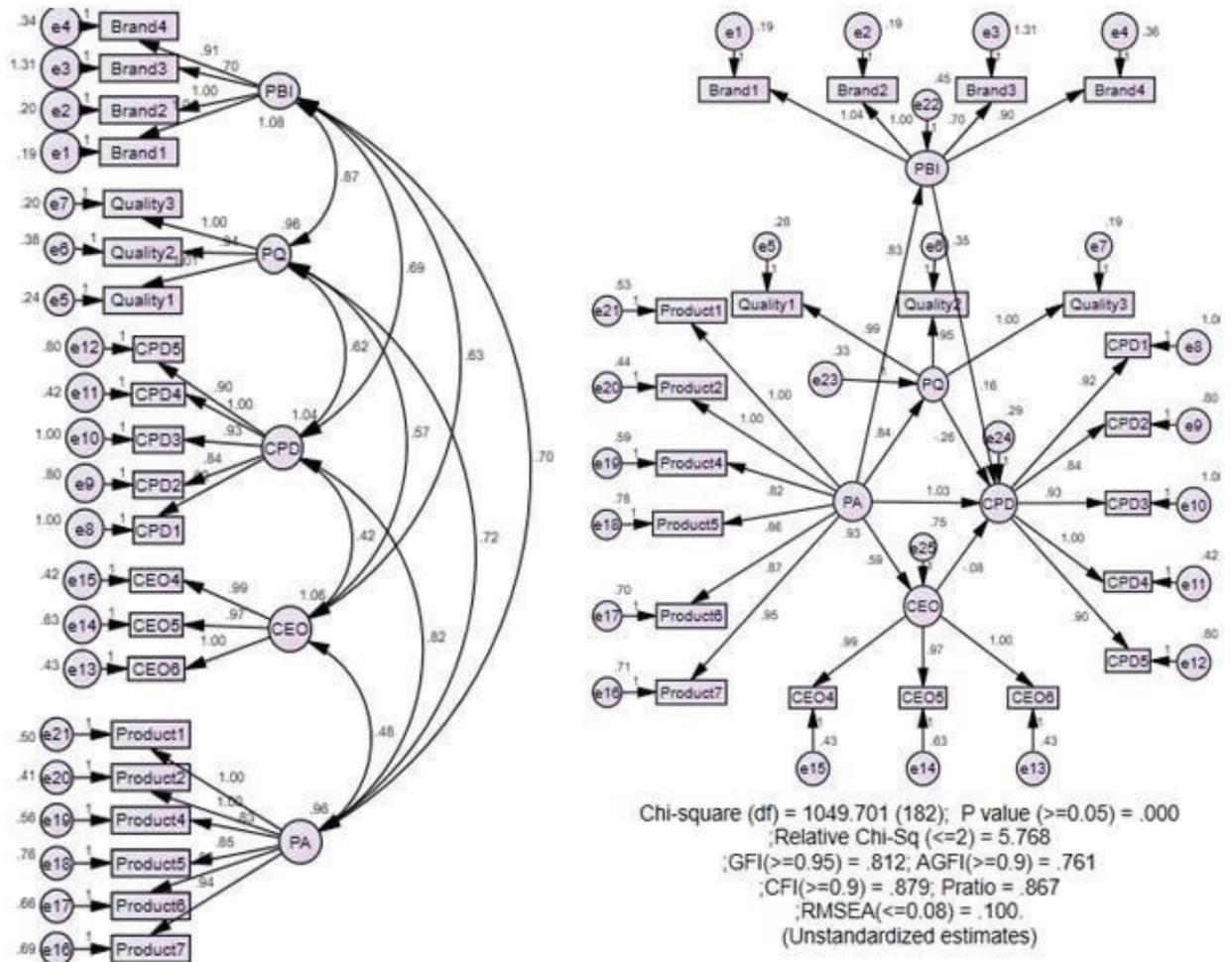
Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this research is to shed light on (1) to examine the influence of product attributes on the young consumers' purchase decision of makeups, (2) to examine the influence of product attribute on the perceived brand image, perceived CEO's image, and perceived quality, (3) to the examine the influence of the perceived brand image, perceived CEO's image, and perceived quality on the young consumers' purchase decision and lastly, (4) to examine the mediating effects of the perceived brand image, perceived CEO's image, and perceived quality in the relationship between the product attribute and the young consumers' purchase decision. The findings demonstrated that (1) product attribute had a significant relationship on the consumer purchase decision. This result supported by several scholars such as Jegethesan et al., (2012), Narteh et al., (2012) and Resnick et al., (2014). Hence, the product attribute is particularly relevant to consumers. Consumer observed product quality through product features such as smooth product's texture, informative product's labelling, functions and packaging (Khraim, 2011). Other scholars consider attributes such as breathable, quick-dry, lightweight, waterproof and durability are an essential consideration in buying cosmetics (Yin & Mansori, 2016). Secondly, (2) the result indicates that product attribute had a significant influence on the perceived

brand image, perceived CEO's image, and perceived quality. Previous scholars have the similar results (Chrysochou, 2010; Kim & Hyun, 2011; Lindsay, 1990; C. W. Park et al., 1986; Villarejo-Ramos, A. F. & Sanchez-Franco, 2005), concurrently, supported this study. The result points out that product attribute affects the perception of young consumers of a brand image, the CEO's image, and quality. Thirdly, (3) perceived the brand image, perceived CEO's image, and perceived quality have significant influences on the young consumers' purchase decision. These results supported by Ahmad et al. (2014), Akir & Othman, (2010), Alif Fianto et al., (2014), Ko et al., (2008), Page & Fearn, (2005). The results confirm that consumers' perception of the brand image, the CEO's image, and quality play a significant role in young consumers' buying responses. Lastly, (4) the mediation results proven that no mediation occurs and the type of mediation is partial mediation. None of the mediators has any effects on the relationship between product attributes and the young consumers' purchase decision.

This research certainly has new contributions since no similar research has ever integrated these constructs in a single model in the previous study. The perceived CEO's image considered a new construct in consumer behaviour because limited empirical studies have investigated the construct in greater details especially in the cosmetic industry. Even, the CEO's image is well investigated in much another area such as leadership, finance, and public relation but still lacking in marketing literature. Practically, a contribution is mainly to marketers in the cosmetic industry. By establishing the perceived brand image, perceived CEO's image and perceived quality of product brand as part of a unique marketing strategy, it will contribute in higher sales, due to customer satisfaction, loyalty, brand equity and later, business success.

Appendix



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