

CONSUMERISM BEHIND CELEBRITY'S ENDORSEMENT IN ONLINE SHOPPING AS A RESULT OF HUMAN'S EXCESSIVE CONSUMPTION OF TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

This essay sets out to see the impact of technology consumption on celebrity's endorsement in online shopping, which also leads to consumerism. The growing technology, which was firstly captured in the Postmodern era, unavoidably appears to be the object of consumption. When the consumption itself becomes excessive, technology can break the boundaries. It is very possible for technology to germinate in every sectors of life. One of the cases captured is online shopping. It is obvious that technology takes a big role to simplify the conventional sales plot which people have to meet face to face to have a transaction. Furthermore, in the case of online shopping, the growing technology also affects the competition among the sellers. In accordance with the tight competition, celebrity's endorsement comes as one of the marketing communication strategies to retain the customers. This essay concludes that human's technology consumption has brought a huge alteration, especially, in the field of business. It spurs the competition, which again, affects the consumerism. The sellers inevitably attempt to find ways to be the most stunning or at least to retain their revenues. Celebrity's endorsement emerges as one of the sellers' common weapon to raise customers' buying desire.

Keywords

celebrity endorsement, consumerism, online shopping, postmodernism, technology consumption

INTRODUCTION

The role of technology oftentimes seems to be inseparable from our lives. In the digital era, technology plays a big role in facilitating human's works across various sectors. One of the advantages of technology in business is online transaction or e-commerce. This method is ultimately created to simplify the conventional sales plot. In the conventional sales plot, time and distance limit the reach of the sales. By having an online-transaction, such impediments can be minimized. As a consequence, the sellers (online shop owners) will be involved in an intense competition with one another.

With more competitors, the sellers unavoidably need to find ways to retain their existing or outreach potential customers for survival. This project captures celebrity's endorsement as one of the ways the online store owners rely on in order to survive in the market, which also clings to consumerism issues. According to a journal entitled

"Celebrity Endorsement: A Literature Review" written by Erdogan (1999), it is vital for major firms to use celebrities as a part of marketing communications strategy to help underpin competitive differential advantage from a firm's products or services. A firm invests money to align their brands and themselves with the endorsers (p. 291). This kind of endorsement which is also possible to be applied in online shopping also comes up with several issues behind. There, the relation amongst the growing technology, this case of e-commerce, and the issues will gradually emerge.

Many studies have been arranged to observe celebrity endorsements and online shopping from a variety of perspectives. Many researchers have examined endorsements by identifying several factors, but most of them tend to see endorsement as a part of a major discipline and its impacts on the viewer and the company. Major firms, according to Endorgan (1999), commonly use celebrities as a part of marketing communication strategies to support a brand's imagery. A firm invests money to adhere the brand with the endorser's qualities such as attractiveness, likeability, and trustworthiness (p. 291). In this paper, he examines the way to find the right endorser for a product depending on the consumption and the culture in order to make it an effective and competitive weapon. It is also claimed that advertising is actually an integral part of social system, whose function is to communicate the culturally constructed meaning of products to consumers (Domzal & Kernan cited in Endorgan, p. 305). It is obvious that he touches a little bit of the role of the culture in this paper, but he just arrives in a very general perspective. Thus, this project will come with a more specific perspective since this project will relate endorsement phenomenon with consumerism issues.

In comparison to Endorgan's work, Elberse and Verleun (2012), in their advertising journal entitled "The Economic Value of Celebrity Endorsements", define endorsement as 'a big business' (p. 163). It seems quite similar to Endorgan's work which sees endorsement as a competitive weapon. Reputation, achievement, and rumor also affect the economic value of it. Though it is a common practice in the world of advertising, sometimes it costs incomparably too much with the profit (p. 150). While those journals seem to have the total view from the marketing side and the advertising side, this project will confer upon how the consumerism issues cling to the celebrity endorsements as a part of those major disciplines.

Furthermore, in order to see how endorsement impacts on buying behavior, Jawaid, Naqvi, and Rajput (2013) focus on how celebrity endorsement impacts on impulsive buying behavior especially in teenager. They argue that youngsters' affection with celebrity enhances the impulsive and unplanned buying because of which teenager procuring ways is changing from premeditated acquiring towards impetuous buying (p. 1077). The focal point of this writing is the precipitate buying by the youth. Their writing inherently brings some issues which can be connected to my project since I will take the youth as those who considered as highly-aware-of-technology individuals or

'digital natives', special terminology introduced by Prensky (cited in David 2011, p. 6). In their essay entitled "Digital Natives and the Return of the Local Cause", David (2011) claims that those who already know a cassette are not digital natives (p. 8). However, this understanding can be half true while it can also work in a shifting way. It cannot be generalized that way. Every individual acquires different local values and factors. Furthermore, cassette cannot be the only benchmark. Time flies and people always find something new.

Another work conducted by Li and Zhang (2002) scrutinizes the views on the attitudes and behavior of online shopping consumer. They summarize the distribution of factors among the studies indicating which factors have been the foci of attention to create consumer satisfaction (p. 514). This will lead the readers to see consumer's attitude and behavior towards online shopping since I use online shopping as the object of this project. Gilly and Wolfinbarger (2000) also observe the online shopping consumer by identifying consumers' motivations for online shopping. They classify some types of consumer based on their motives of shopping such as 'goal-oriented', 'instrumental reasons', and 'experiential reasons' by overriding the social factors and the cultural basis that surround them (p. 1364). Basically, only some parts of this writing which provide how technology features also take parts of the motives will be used in this project.

While those two observations come with the views on the consumer, Hoffman, Novak, and Peralta (1999) concentrate on how to build consumer trust online. Their writing proposes the idea of building trust online as a result of many crime scenes captured these days; it is all linked to online shopping (p. 81). I honestly catch this as a result of the increasing number of gadget users which also means increasing number of online shop owners and consumers. This will result in a tight competition that requires the owner to find a way to gain more customers. Hence this project sets out to expound the relation amidst celebrity's endorsement as one of the ways to gain more customers, consumerism issues, and human's being friendly with technology.

Lastly, Ryadi (2004) highlights the postmodernism and the modernism. This writing provides useful information about the postmodernism and the modernism. Since these two ideology stand against one another, he comes with a title "Postmodernisme Versus Modernisme". This writing basically conveys the way people use the postmodernism to rebut the modernism. Lyotard, who firstly brought the word 'postmodernism' in the world of philosophy, also claims that all critics of the modernism is always identically related to the postmodernism (cited in Ryadi, p. 92). However, this journal tends to cover more material for postmodernism. This is actually fine since this project will only pick the postmodernism as its theoretical basis. Even so, modernism will also be used only for giving a brief information about the role of technology before and after the postmodernism era.

This project aims to analyze the consumerism issues behind celebrity's

endorsement in online shopping and its relation with human's being friendly with technology. Celebrity's endorsement and human's dependency on technology actually look like separated ideas before I come up with the bridge 'online shopping'. However, my main argument in this paper is that this phenomenon is an impact of human's growing dependency on technology in the globalization era that urges people to have all things mobilized to achieve a goal in a very short period of time. It unconsciously creates a lifestyle which sees human and technology as a one composition. This relation amongst all the issues and the phenomenon attracted my mind to conduct a research to see what issues revealed behind celebrity's endorsement in online shopping and its relation to human's being friendly with technology. This project is based on pop culture studies, yet still accepts the theoretical basis of endorsement which actually comes from marketing communication and advertising studies. As a customer and a member of an online shopping community who is also learning cultural studies, it gets my attention to draw all the relations and the abstruse issues behind it.

This project was started by browsing for the general information about celebrity's endorsement in order to see how it works. The next step was about to search for more information about the role of technology, digital information, internet, and online shopping. After completing those steps, the questionnaires were distributed, comprising of a number of customers and sellers. Selective respondents taking were applied for the sellers because this project needed the experienced in handling celebrity's endorsement ones. The datum were gathered from a total of 20 respondents (20 buyers and 20 sellers) who are at the age of 15 –30 in Indonesia. The limit of the age was taken since this project tends to observe this phenomenon on the youth. The respondents were asked some questions about the role of technology in their shopping behavior and the way endorsement sways their buying intention. It linked the phenomenon to the theory of postmodernism and consumerism. Then the most important step which is bridging and analyzing was arrived. In this phase, the issues were revealed. Finally, the final step was about to conclude and to state the issues and the relation between celebrity's endorsement and the growing technology.

THE GLOBALIZATION ERA AND POSTMODERNISM

The portrait of the globalization era is related to the growing technology oftentimes. This is because the growing technology, itself, in this era looks like the key to expedite human's works. The spread of information is also one of the parts impacted by the growing technology. In this era, technology takes a big role in delivering information. Moreover, this era seems to sue all things to be mobilized. This project captures this pattern as a part of postmodernism. The term 'postmodernism' was firstly used in the circle of critics and artists in New York in the late 19th century. This term is basically used to describe an ideology which confronts the modernism or The Big Narration (Ryadi

2004, p. 91). The word 'postmodernism' itself came at first to rebut all the standardization created in the era of modernism. He also adds that those which were created in the era of modernism were usually cold, efficient, and standardized, just like the similar factory buildings. This ideology strongly refuses the idea of totalitarian. Furthermore, it raises human's sensibility gradually and strengthen human's tolerance (2004, p. 91-92). This ideology wants to deny limitation and abolish the boundary. It is also a result of critical thinking which questions about homogeneity.

Regarding to the confrontation issued by postmodernist, modernism actually came with a huge deals of developments. One of the noticeable ones is the developments of technology. Actually, the role of technology has already appeared in the era of modernism. However, in the era of modernism, technology was involved much in mitigating several activities instead of taking a role in the spread of information. According to Baudrillard, the modernism era is labeled by the explosion of mechanism, technology, and market. The postmodernism, on the other hand, comes with the implosion or the consolidation to all borders (cited in Sugiharto 1996, p. 26). While the modernism focuses on the tools only, the postmodernism highlights the use and the way it flows to make the world seems borderless. It is even indirectly connected to the word 'pluralism'. 'It is also mentioned there about pluralism and world culture, those which are considered essential to the understanding of postmodernism.' (Hassan cited in Sugiharto 1996, p. 25). It shows that postmodernism is actually a critic towards the world view as a whole one. One of the examples comes from the world of art mentioned by Ryadi that one of the impact of postmodernism in the world of art is the disappearance of lines between art and daily life, and also between the high-bred culture and pop culture (2004, p. 92). By taking this as an example, it is clear that the aim of postmodernism is to break the boundary. In this paper, this implementation is actually related to the way technology goes freely through the boundary in its role of spreading information.

The postmodernism often seems a bit perplexing when it comes to a comparison to postmodernity. The basic idea of postmodernism is to criticize the modernism. As an ideology, the postmodernism cannot stand without implementation. Hence the term 'postmodernity' arrives. Ryadi also mentions that

In the word 'postmodernism', the prefix 'post-' and the suffix '-ism' often creates vagueness. Regarding to the suffix '-ism', postmodernism is distinguished from postmodernity. The postmodernism focuses more on the philosophical critics of the world's view, epistemology, and modern ideologies. However, the postmodernity highlights the social situation of technological products, globalization, fragmentation, lifestyle, excessive consumerism, deregulation of financial market, and public's facilities, the obsolete nation state, and more observation on traditional inspiration. (2004, p. 91)

Here, the theory of postmodernism, which leads to the implementation called 'postmodernity', starts to show its relation with the focus of this project. Looking at Ryadi's statement, consumerism is also considered as one of the realization of

postmodernism. This statement actually leads to the relation between excessive consumption and postmodernism.

POSTMODERNISM AND HUMAN'S CONSUMPTION

Furthermore, the relation between excessive consumption and the postmodernism provides the clinch of consumerism. The inception of postmodernism has actually impacted on people's consumption behavior. Regarding to Ryadi's statement above, the implementation of postmodernism records some characteristics appeared in the postmodernism era. There are actually three things that can be chalked up each other which are globalization, lifestyle, and excessive consumption. Kushendrawati states that the globalization era can also be identically connected to the global capitalism. This capitalism unavoidably urges the market to develop more and more to be involved in the free trading, which does not only include commodity and service, but also capital and foreign exchanges. In this situation, the society is indirectly transferred to the condition where they comport consumer society (2006, p. 53). The explanation actually conveys the relation amongst the globalization era and consumerism. In other words, the globalization era has created a sphere where it is potential for global capitalism to grow. This capitalization strongly leads the society to excessive consumption regarding to the system.

Moreover, the consumption itself does not merely about consuming commodities. It is also possible to include services and some other things to the list. According to Miles, it is feasible for society to consume many things. He even puts space, technology, popular music, fashion, and sports into the most consumed list (1998). Therefore, it is obvious that Miles sees almost everything in human's life can be consumed. He clearly defines the word 'consuming' in a broad perspective. 'Once established such a culture of consumption is quite indiscriminating and everything becomes a consumer item, including meaning, truth, and knowledge.' (Sampson cited in Miles 1998, p. 24). Sampson points out that the incipience of consumerism makes meaning, truth, and knowledge seem salable. By apprehending Sampson's explanation, it seems like there is not any clear lines between the commercial and the not commercial ones. Such culture is possible to distort the lines between the marketable and the unmarketable ones. Miles also examines that

The division between high and low culture become increasingly blurred in a postmodern culture where choice appears to reign supreme, but where hesitation, anxiety, and doubt seem to be the price to pay for such freedom. As such, Lyon argues that consumption provides a means of oiling the wheels of symbolic distinctiveness to extent that 'if postmodernity means anything, it means the consumer society. (1998, p. 24)

From the statement of Miles, it is clear that postmodernity also impacts on the line between the salable and the not salable ones. It is even more than purchasing things. Miles includes the words 'hesitation', 'anxiety', and 'doubt' to describe the society's feeling. According to his statement, the society willingly pays for freedom. This also has become a characteristic of the postmodern society. Thus, they are called the consumer society.

TECHNOLOGY CONSUMPTION

However, based on Miles' explanation, technology is also included in the list. Consuming technology is basically inevitably substantial. People can use more than one technology at the same time. Technology surely fulfills human's life. The use of technology cannot always be classified separately. One innovation can do several functions oftentimes. This actually affects human's behavior towards technology. '[...] it could be argued that computers are beginning to take over our lives; that the benefits of computer are blinding us to the more unsavory aspect to the more computer consumption.' (Miles 1998, p. 76). The role of computer in postmodernity is a good way to walk on the aim of this project. Computer is almost considered as the thing human cannot live without. Obviously, computer brings human to the ease. The use itself, now has become things that human consumes.

Technology always runs with new innovations. Prensky describes the gap between those who was born in the digital era and those who just adopt technology consumption in their life, by using *digital natives* and *digital immigrants* (Prensky cited in David, p. 3). Prensky defines the generation into two separate groups which are those who were born in digital era and those who were not born in the digital world, but have become engrossed by and adopted many aspects of the new technology and digital stuffs. However, this classification raises a debate. 'Perhaps one way of doing so is by shifting the weights in the definition of digital natives from "being digital" to "being native"' (David, p. 4). Technology innovations work in a shifting way. They keep growing. Someday, something which is considered new this time can be considered as an obsolete device later. The shifting keeps going. This is the reason people cannot judge whether the generation is the native technology generation or not, since there is not any certain determination to cut the generation separately. People just notice more about the world's consumption which also keeps moving.

The development of technology in postmodernism era can be translated in several ways. This project portraits the growing technology in postmodernism era and relates it to the consumerism. By taking the growing technology and consumerism, this paper comes up with the bridge 'online shopping'. According to Gilly and Wolfinbarger, website design and strategy issues should be based on motivations and satisfaction for online buyers to achieve a better result (2000, p. 1364). Gilly and Wolfinbarger clearly

propose the idea of technology since they include web design as one of the factors and use the online shopping as their object of the observation. For the case of online shopping, the role of technology and consumerism is strongly bonded one to another. The growing technology has impacted on human's shopping behavior, especially in online shopping. Basically, the word 'online' itself has described that this kind of purchasing activity cannot be done without technology. Gilly and Wolfinbarger also adds that

Moreover, as younger surfer become full-fledged consumer, experiential benefits (for instance, streaming video, community forum, games, auctions) may become more desirable at websites. Before emphasizing such benefits, however, sites need to identify a base of users who are regular visitors and who are involved with the product category (p. 1364)

From the explanation, it is implicitly stated that those (younger surfers) who buys online are also uses other sites for many reasons. They do not only use shopping sites, but also other sites such as social networking, videos, games, and even auctions. It is actually one of the proofs that technology has impacted many sectors of our life beside shopping behavior. Eventually, this project is inclined to see the way technology sways the intention of buying, without rejecting the fact that technology also affects in many sectors of human's life.

CELEBRITY'S ENDORSEMENT IN ONLINE SHOPPING

Aside from being used in many sectors of human's life, technology also involves in the growing of marketing strategy. As its use in online shopping gets more and more day by day, the competition among the sellers gets more intense as well. Basically, it is because both the sellers and the customers are gadget users. The number of the buyers also grows, but the intense competition cannot be avoided. It may be because one seller can manage more than one online store. By looking at the fact that the competition gets tighter as the time goes by, they inevitably need to find a way to retain or even outreach their customers. In this paper, celebrity endorsement is basically captured as one of the sellers' weapon to survive amidst the competition. Moreover, Endorgan also adds that,

In sum celebrity endorsement strategy can be an effective competitive weapon in mature and saturated markets in order to differentiate products from competitors' since there is a heavy advertising clutter and almost no room for actual product differentiation in markets as long as the 'right' celebrity is found (1999, p. 308).

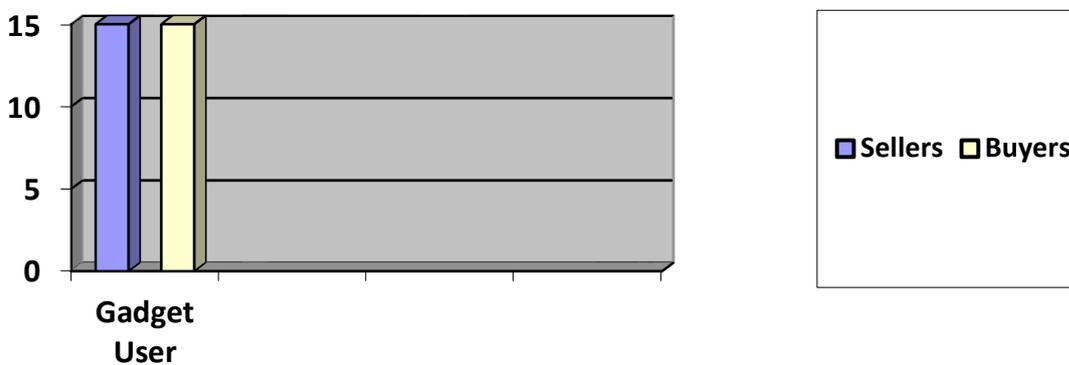
The concept of celebrity endorsement in online shopping is more or less still the same with the one done by a company. Based on Endorgan's explanation, it is obvious that celebrities are used to communicate the benefits of using the product. The celebs' image sometimes can be an important aspect in endorsement since the company also imposes on it. Finding the right celebrity also means finding a concise representation of

the product. In addition, it is clear that in online shopping, sometimes the sellers offer the same items with different price. For the context used by a company, the customers can tell the difference by easily looking at the product, recognizing the packaging, and other ways the customers use to tell that different company produce different products, though the function is precisely the same. However, in online stores, most of them are only resellers. Hence they sell the same products, exactly the same item, same amount, and sometimes the same price. Here, the role of marketing strategy hands the survival. By being in such a tight competition, the sellers contrive a strategy to survive. Whatever happens, they have to be able to outsmart the way they survive. It is actually fine if the sellers initiate more than one strategy. However, this paper picks celebrity endorsement as one of the sellers' weapons.

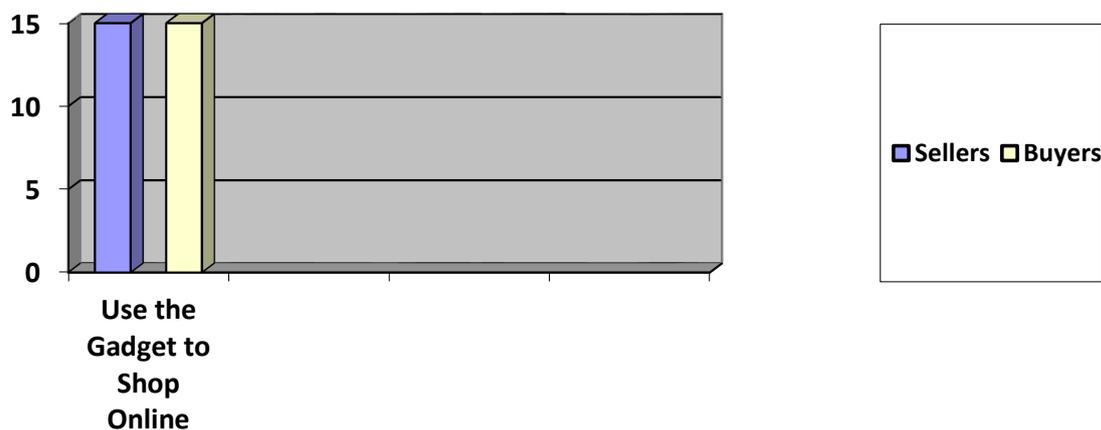
FINDINGS

In order to see how the growing technology tangles with online shopping, a group of respondents consisting of ten sellers and ten customers were asked (by questionnaire).

- Are you a gadget user? (smartphone, tablet, netbook/notebook, etc)



- Do you use the gadget to shop online?

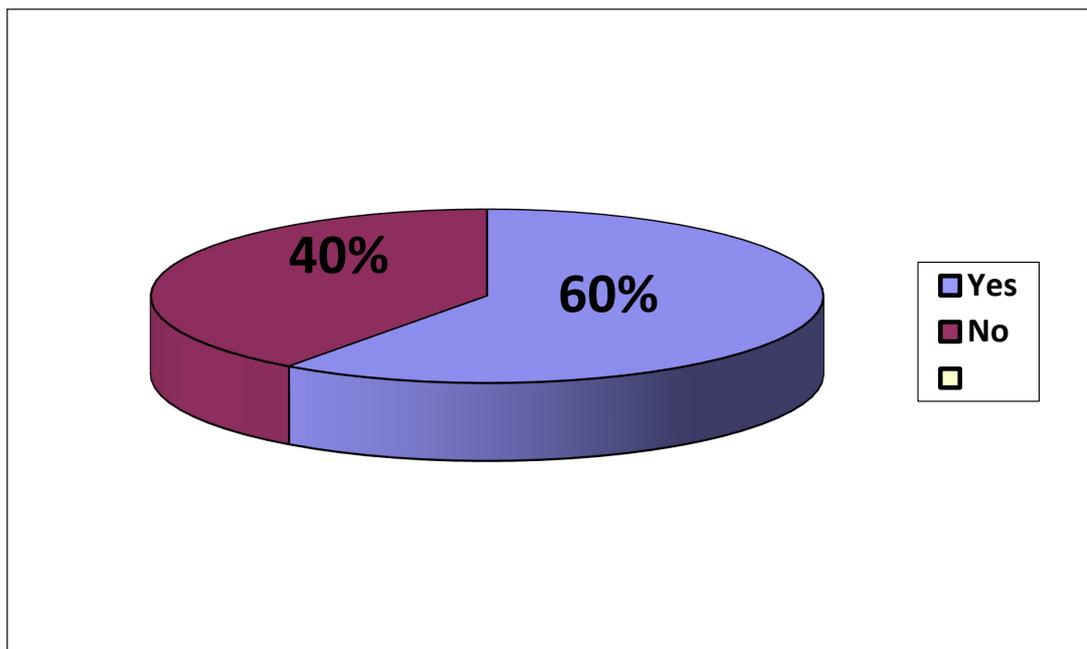


Based on the result, both the sellers and the buyers are actually gadget users and online shoppers. Since most of them are resellers, those who own online stores are basically online shoppers (buyers) as well. Some of them have even made this as their job. Those who already produce items by themselves (not reselling) are also included. Most of them do not even have the 'real' stores. Even those who already have their own brands, they only sell it online. From the result, it is actually clear that technology accommodates human's works well. Those who only depend themselves on their online stores obviously cannot do anything without their consumption of technology.

Furthermore, the respondents were not only asked about their consumption of technology, but also about celebrity endorsements. The following charts infer the results from the buyer respondents.

The first question aims to dig the relation between celebrity's endorsement and the customers' buying intention.

- Does the celebrity endorsement sway your buying intention? Elaborate your answer.

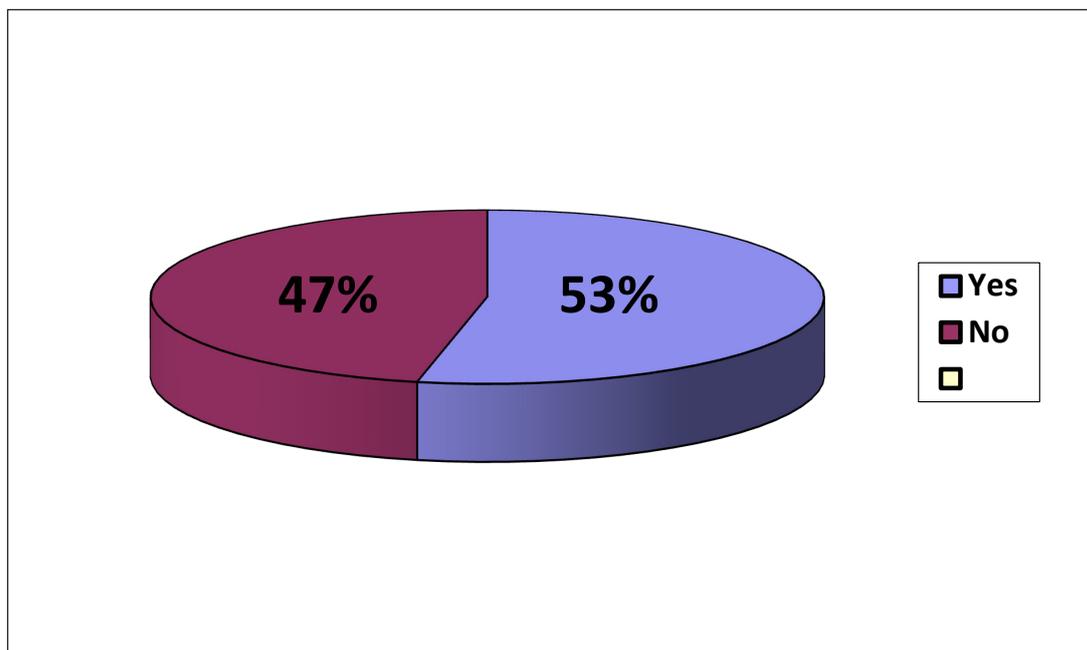


Most of the respondents agree that celebrity endorsement works for affecting their buying intention. They admit that they get attracted easily because of two basic reasons. The first reason is that they are curious. They are nosy with the stuffs the public figures wear. Surprisingly, many of them admit that they sometimes feel hard to distinguish which endorsement is based on qualities and on payment or free items. However, this hardness does not really affect their curiosity. The second reason is that they tend to copy the celebrities' styles, especially their idols. Despite the fact that the celebrities get paid for promoting, these people still feel that they need to get the same items to create

the styles, which they consider cool or special as the public figures wear or use. On the other hand, about 33% of the respondents think that celebrities' endorsement do not do anything to touch their buying intention. They also mention three reasons. The first reason is that the celebrity is paid, so he/she does not really know the quality of the product. They use it because of the money. They use it because they are paid, not because of the quality. The second reason is that endorsement cannot guarantee the quality of the stores. Many of them are also part of online frauds. Those who already adopted celebrity in endorsing the products may also be the fraudsters. The last reason is that sometimes the celebrity is given the items for free. This makes people think that the celebrities just want the free items. They do not really embrace the products due to the quality, which the consumers mostly expect, but the free items themselves.

In addition, most the buyer respondents also admitted that the developing technology affects their consumptive rates.

- Does the developing technology affect your expenses (in the case of online shopping)?
If yes, elaborate your answer.

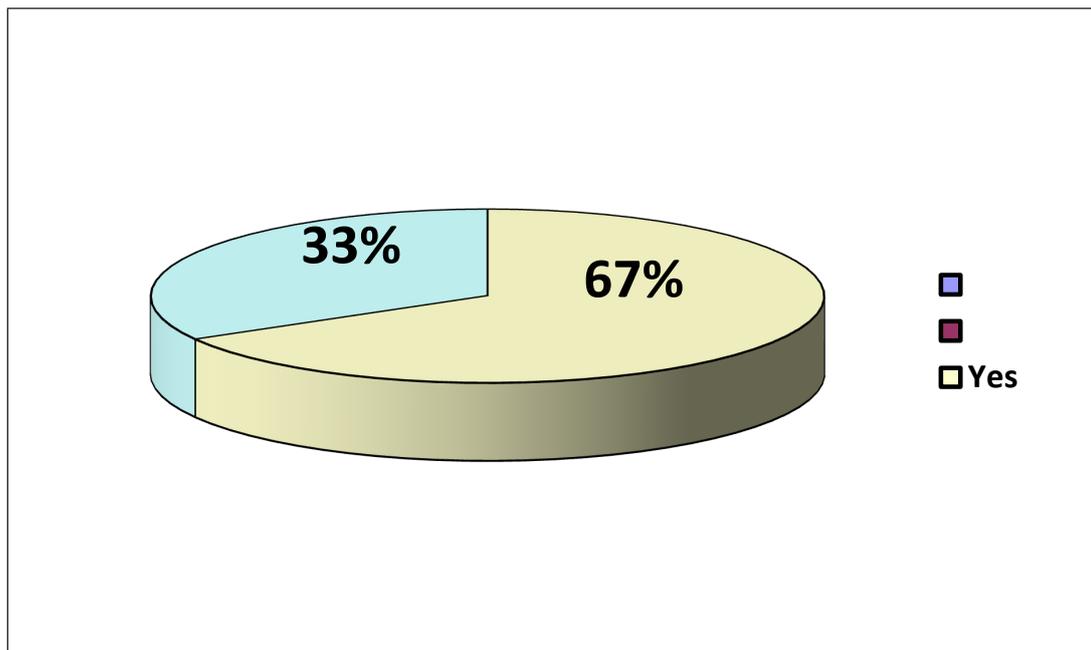


From this question, most of the respondents agree that they do not only acknowledge technology as a helper, but also as propulsion that makes them more consumptive. Those who go with 'yes' avow that they can randomly browse for things, which they do not really need, in their spare time. Browsing for things or just having a window shopping in online stores in the spare time is like a habit for them. Unfortunately, this habit often ends with bills. This clearly shows that the developing technology predisposes them to be more consumptive.

Moving on to the next group of respondents, from the sellers' side, the questionnaires were distributed to those who have experienced having endorsement in their online stores.

The first question is intended to see the impact of celebrity endorsement in the sellers' income.

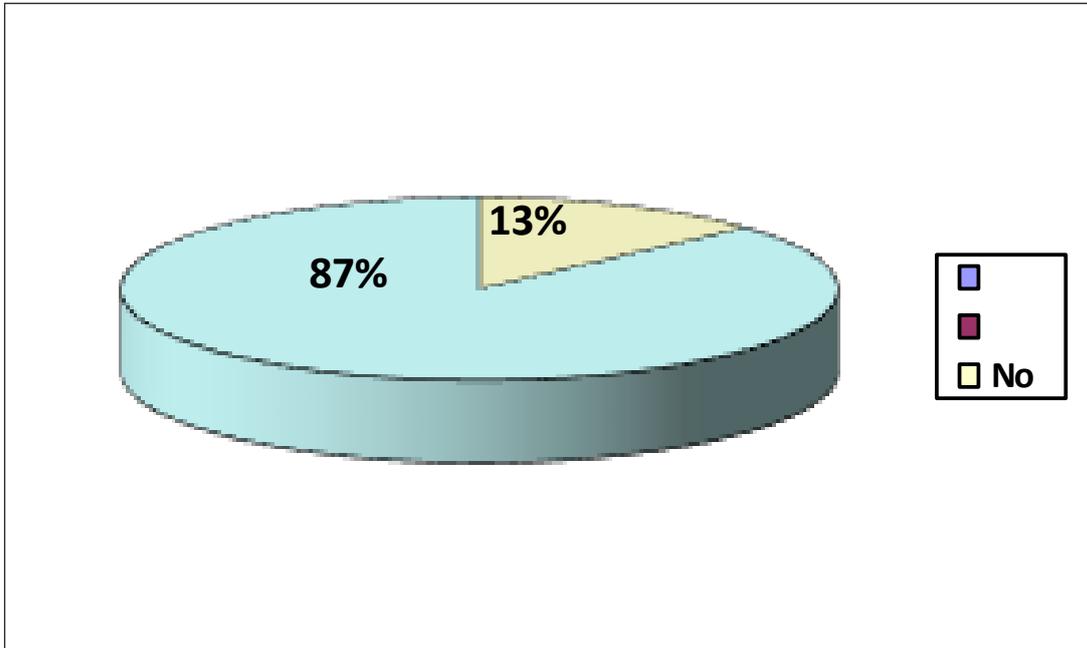
- Does endorsement really work to pump up your income? Both answers must be elaborated.



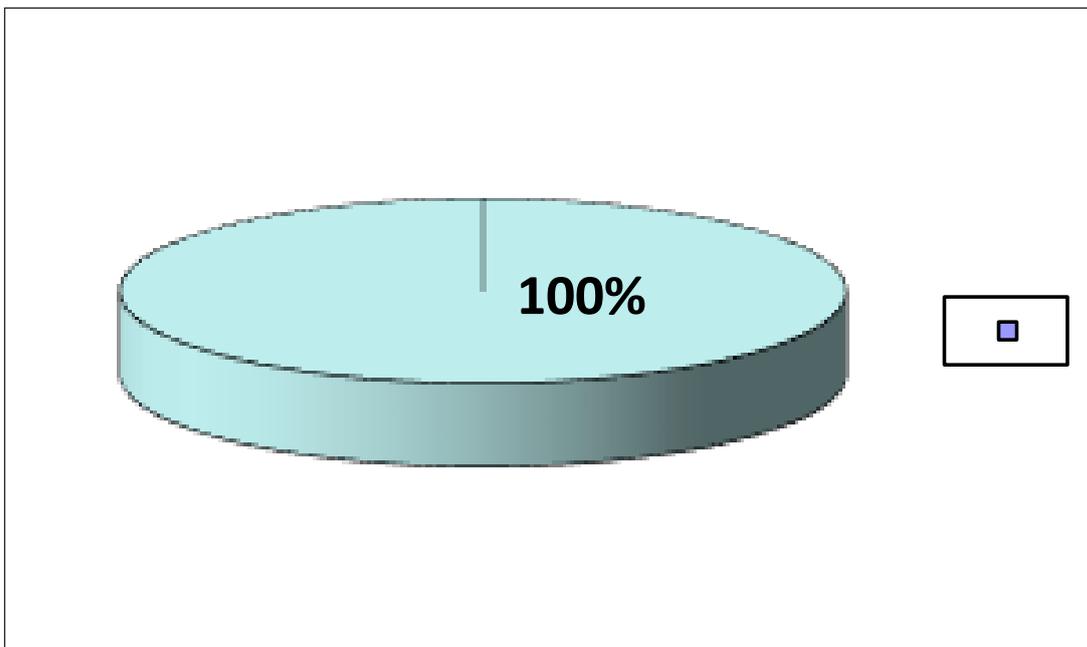
About 67% of the seller respondents feel that endorsement works to pump up their income. They admitted that they use celebrity endorsement as a way to gain customers. On the contrary, about 33% of the sellers think that endorsement does not really work to gain customers. Most of them also added that there are so many ways to gain customers. Endorsement is one of them, but they do not really depend on it. There are some alternatives such as discount, giveaway, bonus, and free-shipping. These ways make them more convenient to choose. They also add that it is fine to use celebrity endorsement, but it is only about reading the target market, the image of the endorser, and the way they correlate each other.

The next two questions are targeted to get a grasp of view about the role of technology in their commercial activities.

- Do you also own a real store anywhere else beside the online store?



- Does the expanding of some social media toward operating systems impact on your income? (case example : the case of Instagram. At first, instagram was only released for Apple products, but then, few years later, this social media was also available for Android products, then followed by Windows products, and etc)



From the chart, about 87% of the seller respondents only count on their online stores. Here, the role of technology is, again, clear. Based on their elaborations, they

prefer online store rather than the real store because online store do not need too much maintenance cost. Furthermore, nowadays, the booming social media has become a way to run a business. By having an account, the user can post anything. In accordance, people from around the world can see stuffs that you post. The most interesting thing about running a business in social media is that it is all free, so it can practically minimize the cost that they need if they run a business in real stores. In addition, the transaction is also quite simple. They do not even need to meet. Basically, this is also about trust and building a good reputation. Thus, the endorsement appears as a way to prove whether the store is trustworthy or not. Moreover, it is clear that all of the seller respondents agree that the expanding of social media influences their competition. Before the expanding, the competition was just amongst the same gadget users, but then, after the expanding, the amount of the competitors increased dramatically. Basically, this shows the way the growing technology urges the sellers to find a way to retain their customers.

CONCLUSION

The growth of technology has served kinds of eases in human's life. The role of technology, which was salient in the Postmodern era, can also be seen in the field of business. This project highlights the role of technology in business, especially the use of technology as a marketing communication tool. The case of celebrity's endorsement in online shopping clearly shows the impact of the growing technology in the field of online business that also leads to consumerism. To complete this research, questionnaires were distributed to a number of respondents, both the sellers and the buyers.

From the result of the questionnaires, it is affirmed that the growth of technology spurs the idea of celebrity's endorsement in online shopping. As one of human's consumption, technology gives a huge impact to human's consumerism. Sometimes, it helps a lot, but there are times when technology itself becomes a challenge. The limitations of this research appear from various sides. This research was restricted only to Jakarta city. The data was also collected from selected age group and selected respondents (for the sellers). The sample used in this study does not fully represent the whole shopping behavior in online shopping since the items are generalized.

The study does not include the reason behind the sellers' choosing endorsement, the issues behind celebrity's endorsement beside its relation to technology consumption, and consumerism based on items as well. Further research can be conducted based on specific items and endorser. A number of different factors are also possible to be connected to the consumerism behind celebrity's endorsement. The recommendation for the next research is that it is better to include a law that underlies cyber activities and cases.

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