

Celebrity Endorsement in Advertisement on Destination Choice Among Generation Y in Hong Kong

Grace Suk Ha Chan¹, Ada Lai Yung Lee² & Connie Hiu Man Wong³

¹ Faculty of International Tourism and Management, City University of Macau, Macau SAR, China

² School of Business, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong SAR, China

³ School of Professional Education and Executive Development, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong SAR, China

Correspondence: Ada Lai Yung Lee, School of Business, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong SAR, China.

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Abstract

This study investigated celebrity endorsement for travel destination choice. The study also adopted Hong Kong's Generation Y as an example and explored the affective image and visitation intention. By using quantitative approach, the study analyzed Hong Kong's Generation Y that relates to celebrity endorsement for travel destination choice. The results affirm that the hypothesis was corroborated. Celebrity endorsement delivers favorable affective image towards Generation Y. In addition, the study confirms that favorable affective image positively affects the visit intention of Generation Y to travel destinations. However, marketers must understand how to make use of celebrity endorsement to influence Generation Y on their destination choice and finally turn their intention to purchase action.

Keywords: celebrity endorsement, advertisement, Generation Y, destination choice, Hong Kong

1. Introduction

Celebrity endorsement is a common marketing communication strategy for building brand image (Spry, Pappu, & Cornwell, 2011). Till, Priluck, & Stanley (2008) affirmed that celebrity endorsement influences advertising effectiveness, brand recognition, brand recall, purchase intentions and even purchase behaviour. Research has identified a core group of symbolic dimension that determines the level of customer belief in celebrity endorsement including trustworthiness, expertise, personality, appearance, attractiveness, competency, relationship, likeability, familiarity and identification (Amos, Holmes, & Stratton, 2008).

Jackie Chan has been chosen as one of the celebrities in Hong Kong for destination promotion. Therefore, examining how celebrity endorsement affects the destination choice of visitors is crucial.

In recent years, film tourism has become a common phenomenon globally. Several studies proved that film, television and celebrities are powerful forces that influence individuals to go to a tourism destination.

1.1 Problem Statements

Glover (2009) corroborated that celebrity involvement or endorsement is a method that stimulates tourists to visit a tourism destination. In many countries, a large competition exists among the hospitality business. Korea, Japan or China, they want to capture a large number of tourism business in the destination, therefore marketing campaign use celebrity endorsement to exhibit their products or services in order to target their potential customers. De Mooij (1997) argued that event highly promoted advertisement would only overload in the current era, audience selective perception mechanisms are working harder as result only draw little their attention. Several scholars of source credibility indicate that celebrity endorsers not only attract and maintain attention, but also transfer the right message and achieve high recall rates for marketing messages cluttered environment (Agrawal & Kamakura; Atkin & Block, 1983; Dryer, 1988). However, Generation Y had been ignored and under discussion. The few studies that have done so have focused on how Generation Y such as their certain types of behavior such as buying or effect from celebrity influence (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003; Martin & Turley, 2004). Generation Y are an important and interesting segment for marketers to understand and target.

Given that Generation Y will be the largest demographic and economic market in 2020 (Chua, 2010), destination marketers should understand the perception of Generation Y to focus on this market for launching tourism products. It can gain a better understood for this growing group. Bush, Martin, & Bush (2004) verified that organizations should understand the influences of celebrity endorsement towards the young ones to help them and their marketers reach and target this growing market effectively.

Certainly, some tourism organizations tried to promote tourism destinations by using celebrities. The Hong Kong Government also used celebrities to promote the famous spots in Hong Kong to domestic and international tourists. For instance, actor Sean Lau promoted the natural scenery of Hong Kong in a video by the Hong Kong Tourism Board in 2017. The current study will show the celebrity effect in relation to the destination choice of Generation Y. New products such as celebrity involvement in product endorsement apps and key opinion leaders found in various media approaches aim to promote tourism destinations.

The present study aims to investigate celebrities' involvement in the destination choice of Generation Y. On the basis of the result, destination marketers may provide implication on how they approach Generation Y consumers appropriately such that they can promote their tourism business in a destination.

Numerous studies (Van der Veen & Song, 2010; Lee, Scott, & Kim, 2008; Chan, Ng, & Luk, 2013; Kim, Lee, & Prideaux, 2014) have focused on different groups of people's perceptions on celebrity involvement. Different from the previous study, a special segment group (Generation Y) was chosen for analyzing their attitudes, perceptions and affective image on celebrity involvement. Few discussions that relate to celebrity effects on the destination choice of Hong Kong's Generation Y have been found. Most previous studies only focused on shopping and buying behavior or celebrity influence (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003; Martin & Turley, 2004; Bush, Martin, & Bush, 2004).

Celebrity endorsement is a common marketing communication strategy for building brand image. Few studies have been found on celebrity's credibility on destinations and Generation Y (Chan, 2010). Several scholars have validated that celebrity endorsers attract and maintain attention, transfer right messages and gain high recall rates for marketing messages (Agrawal & Kamakura; Atkin & Block, 1983; Dyer, 1988; Erdogan, 1999). Van der Veen (2008) argued that selecting a destination is commonly an emotional choice and that a celebrity cannot change the viewpoint of customers. Certain studies discussed that destination marketing can manipulate the image of a destination to increase its appeal to target customers (Fajete & Crompton, 1991; Litvin & Ling, 2000). Although celebrity endorsement is only one instrument in the extensive promotional arsenal available to marketers, it may serve as a creative tool to support marketing campaigns. Several academics have asserted that the link between a destination and a well-known personality can be of enormous benefit in the promotion of that destination and may attract media attention (Morgan & Prithcard, 2001). Generation Y strive to develop personality traits, attitudes, values and physical appearance similar to those of their idols' celebrity image (Boon & Lomore, 2001; Caughey, 1994). In Korea, celebrity endorsement is the most frequently used appeal in tourism commercials for youth products and travel magazine advertisements. In Hong Kong, nearly half of the government's publicity campaigns employ endorsers as well (Chan, 2010).

The current study made academic contributions to scholars. The study gained a broad understanding of the effects of celebrity endorsement on the destination choice of Generation Y.

The three objectives designed in this study are as follows:

- 1) Investigate how celebrities affect the destination choice of Generation Y;
- 2) Explore the perception of Generation Y when choosing their travel destination and
- 3) Recommend to destination marketers how to promote their tourism products to Generation Y, as result it can target this growing group effectively.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Celebrity Endorsement in Hong Kong

McCraken (1989) verified that the credibility and attractiveness of a celebrity are blind to an endorser's role as a medium and shape the perceived message among advertisements.

Celebrity endorsement must be understood to have a three-part meaning transfer process. The first stage includes the dramatic roles, political campaigns and/or athletic achievements of a celebrity. The second stage is a result of celebrity endorsement and transfer to a product, and the last stage is celebrity endorsement and transfer from a product to a consumer. Many examples are found in Korea and Taiwan, wherein they transfer celebrity endorsement to the destination itself and then move it to a consumer. An attractive endorser can enhance the

attractiveness of a destination image. The conceptual argument is that attractive celebrities are highly effective endorsers for products that enhance one's physical appearance (Till & Busler, 2000).

Adolescent consumers have special buying power (Bush et al., 2004), and Generation Y create value and conformity (Chan et al., 2013). Hong Kong's strong film, television and music industries provide a constant supply of popular singers and actors. A survey identified that many teenagers in Hong Kong are likely to choose famous singers and movie stars as their idols (So & Chan, 1992). For instance, Sammi Cheng has over 400,000 Facebook fans (Famecount, 2011). The use of celebrities in advertising is prevalent in Hong Kong, wherein celebrities such as a popular singer, movie actors and actresses and famous athletes are commonly employed as spokespersons for products and services that target Generation Y (Chan, 2010). A study in Hong Kong affirmed that most Generation Y would like to express the moderate levels of social comparison with media celebrities but a low level of imitation. The survey corroborated that the imitation of celebrities and social comparison with media celebrities are positively correlated with the endorsement of materialistic values (Chan & Prendergast, 2008).

Turner (2013) argued that celebrities have emerged from two industries including sports and entertainment. Such celebrities will be visible via media, television and movies. Young & Pinsky (2006) asserted that celebrities are individuals who have achieved a certain level of fame and are well-known in society. Andrews and Jackson (2001) proposed that celebrities are role models, powerful cultural leaders and media figures around the world. The celebrity culture has changed in recent years. Celebrity culture occurs in different types of channels like social networking websites and video sharing platforms (Singh, 2016). In line with this, celebrity involvement is occurring in television programmes and appearing in different types of channels, especially online platforms. The attractiveness of a celebrity to consumers may be one of the reasons why celebrities are found to be more effective communicators than non-celebrities (Chao, Wuhrer, & Werani, 2005). Attractiveness is a crucial factor and is highly credible in measuring the perceived image of celebrity endorsers (Patzner, 1985). Hofstede (2001) argued that individualism is mostly found in western countries, whereas collectivism is generally found in Asian countries. Collectivism and individualism are commonly found in advertisements. Collectivism values the sense of belonging and family, most likely found in Korean than in US celebrities (Choi et al., 2005). Consumers in Asian countries tend to follow collectivism. As Hong Kong is an Asian region, it is usually group oriented to a certain extent. Therefore, consumers in Hong Kong are expected to be highly affected by advertisements, especially advertisements that use celebrity appeal. Many consumers who are attracted to celebrity endorsement in tourism products are adolescents. Chan et al. (2013) identified that the perception of adolescents work under celebrity endorsement in advertisement. Therefore, investigating how celebrity affects the destination choice of adolescents, particularly Generation Y, is important.

2.2 *Why Generation Y?*

According to the categorization of generations by Brodshah & Carpenter (2011), the birth dates are divided as follows: Silent Generation (1925 to 1945), Baby Boomers (1946 to 1960), Generation X (1961 to 1981) and Generation Y (those born after 1981).

Generation Y are people who were born between 1980 and 1994, which can be separated into Generation Y adult and Generation Y teen segments (Schiffman, O'Cass, Paladino, & Carlson, 2013). This group of people is also known as "echo boomers" (Schiffman, O'Cass, Paladino, & Carlson, 2013). Certain characteristics of Generation Y are being most influenced by their friends or peers, focused on short-term needs and highly loyal to peer relationships (Schiffman, O'Cass, Paladino, & Carlson, 2013). Celebrity and brand consciousness are firmly planted in the minds of Generation Y (Benckendorff, Moscardo, & Pendergast, 2010).

2.3 *Features of Generation Y*

Alch (2000) elucidated that Generation Y believe in long-term learning and prefer to use technology in different aspects (Rowh, 2007) because they grew up with the Internet and use it for amusement and information (Oblinger, 2003). Generation Y are generally averse to reading (Giolia, 2004) and reject text-oriented messages (Nielsen, 2005) as mundane (Perez, 2008). Generation Y prefer rich visual message to purely text communication (Carr & Ly, 2009) and make use of social media for contributing, sharing, consuming or searching for content, participating and playing.

In western culture, Generation Y are identified as eager to spend money (Curtin, 2009). In Asian culture, particularly in China, aside from being big spenders, Generation Y have become "king" of their family because of the one child policy; their buying behaviour are affected by their peers. Generation Y are excited about innovate products and new brands, and they prefer to spend on product customization (Xu, 2007). However, Generation Y are "brand switchers" and the buying power of this group will only increase over time (Juristic &

Azevedo, 2011; Waters, 2006).

Generation Y also “want it all” and “want it now”, and are focused on work pay and benefits, career advancement and work/life balance (Ng et al., 2010; Twenge, 2001).

2.4 Social Media use of Generation Y

Palfrey & Gasser (2008) identified that Generation Y grew up with computers more than anyone else in the family; thus, they are commonly described as technologically savvy and the most visually sophisticated of any generation. Generation Y use social media considering its wide categories of usage: contributing, sharing, consuming or searching for content, participating and playing. Meanwhile, several studies claimed that Generation Y spend a considerable amount of time simply consuming content just like other generations (Pempek et al., 2009). Generation Y use social media for information, leisure or entertainment; socializing and experiencing a sense of community (Valkenburg et al., 2006); and staying in touch with friends (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). Therefore, for destination management, many countries use social media and adopt celebrity endorsement to promote their cities. Various countries in Asia such as Taiwan, Korea or Hong Kong also use social media to promote their cities. Therefore, understanding how Generation Y is affected by their favored celebrity and choice of destination is important.

In sum, Generation Y are an important and interesting target segment for destination marketers to understand and capture the group.

2.5 Conceptual Model

Dean (1999) corroborated that celebrity involvement is a type of cue for intending to positively influence people’s perceptions on products and brands. Predictably, celebrity involvement may be one of the leading stimuli factors that increase the likelihood of purchasing tourism products or services. Bush, Martin, & Bush (2004) also argued that a sports celebrity has a positive influence on Generation Y’s purchasing intentions and behaviours. Generation Y (Gen Y) may easily change their purchase decision due to celebrity involvement. Gen Y is an emotional group of people when making purchases, and celebrity involvement may affect their emotion. In addition, the emotional state of Gen Y may affect their visitation intention to travel destinations. Thus, the relationships of these constructs are listed as follows:

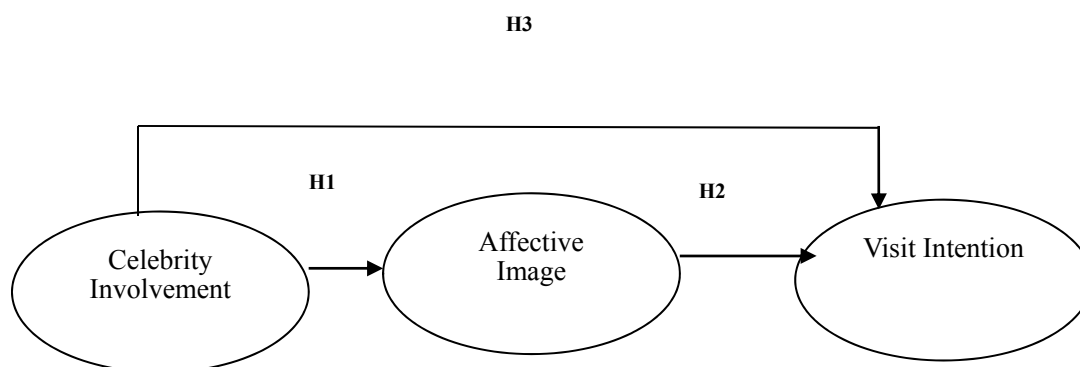


Figure 1: Hypothetical model between celebrity and visit intention

Lee, Scott, & Kim (2008) argued that celebrity involvement would influence people’s perceptions and attitudes towards travel destinations and affirmed that celebrity involvement would positively influence the relation of people’s affective image. Aronson, Wilson, & Akert (1999) confirmed that a travel programme presented by a celebrity results in a high degree of receptiveness to travel destinations. Aronson, Wilson, & Akert (1999) also proved that celebrity involvement and affective image have close linkages, along with the selected celebrity who is also significant to the destination marketers.

Gartner (1993) proposed that one of the roles of celebrities is to act as an agent to formulate destination image, which is also called “icon marketing”, an important tool in marketing places (Kotler, Rein, & Haider, 1993). Celebrity can also change people’s affective image towards destinations, which means that celebrity involvement can be a middleman to develop destination image and build up affective image. Hence, we predict the following:

H1: “Celebrity involvement” has a positive influence on “affective image” towards Generation Y.

Affective image implies tourists' feelings about their travel destination (Bricker & Donohoe, 2015). Russell & Barrett (1999) affirmed that these images are extremely significant in the decision-making process, especially for people swayed by positive and negative emotional states. Certainly, the positive relationship between the affective image of people and the visitation intention to destinations were confirmed in a previous study (Court & Lupton 1997). A favourable affective image is predicted to possibly influence the visitation intention or purchasing behaviour of a tourism product by Gen Y. The following hypothesis is offered:

H2. Favourable “affective image” has a positive influence on the “visit intention” of Generation Y.

According to Lee, Scott, & Kim (2008), celebrity involvement may act as a catalyst for people's desire to visit a travel destination. Celebrity involvement is also related to idol worship. High levels of worship enhance people's visitation intention. Benckendorff, Moscardo, & Pendergast (2010) claimed that a celebrity is firmly planted in the Gen Y mind. Reader (2007) contended that people construct their personal meaning via going to the travel destination related to their adored celebrity. Therefore, such action presented a strong resemblance to a pilgrimage. Visitation intention is defined as a predictor for evaluating human behavioural intentions in the tourism context including the attitudes towards visiting a travel destination (Lam & Hsu, 2006). Van der Veen & Song (2014) corroborated that the characteristics of a visit intention depend on people's attitudes and perceptions. The positive effect of a travel television program or advertisement with the involvement of a celebrity is twined with the positive influence on attitude and visit intention towards a travel destination. Therefore, celebrity involvement may be one of the reasons that they go to travel destinations. The following hypothesis is, thus, developed:

H3. A positive relationship exists between “celebrity involvement” and Generation Y's “visit intention.”

3. Methodology

The quantitative method was applied. A survey questionnaire was developed to test the hypotheses and answer the questions in the previous section.

3.1 Participants and Procedure

Questionnaires were distributed to 150 individuals utilizing stratified sampling techniques. Respondents were pre-screened and restricted to Hong Kong permanent residents and aged between 18 and 32 (Gen Y). The on-site survey was conducted at the Hong Kong International Airport on weekends from the end of April to May, 2017 which corresponds to the end of the semester in the university. Participation was voluntary.

3.2 Questionnaire Design and Measures

Each questionnaire was divided into two parts for gathering information about Gen Y and their travel experience. The items focused on celebrity involvement, affective image and visit intention. A total of 22 questions were designed to identify the field of the participants' preferred celebrities who promoted destinations, the extent of their visit intention and the affective image via the celebrity advertising.

A travel television program was presented to the respondents through a mobile phone. The program was hosted by To Yu Fung (a well-known celebrity in promoting tourism destination via television and social media platforms, such as Facebook). Therefore, the respondents would possess additional information about celebrity involvement promoting the destination before filling in the questionnaires. The questionnaires included four parts: (I) attitudes of celebrity involvement, (II) affective image, (III) visit intention and (IV) demographic background. Eight constructs were initially designed to analyse Gen Y's attitudes towards celebrity involvement using a seven-point Likert scale (from 1: strongly disagree to 7: strongly agree). Scale items primarily focused on attitudes towards celebrity involvement in the travel destination through constructs such as “Celebrity involvement would influence my travel destination decision”, “I went to the travel destination because of celebrity involvement” and “Celebrity involvement would give me a positive image of the destination” on a scale. The second part used a seven-point semantic differential scale for measuring the destination perceptions of affective image on the Gen Y mind. The respondents were asked “How did you feel after watching the travel program hosted by the celebrity?” and used eight semantic differential scales for their response including: “pleasant-unpleasant”, “relaxing-distressing”, “exciting-gloomy”, “arousing-sleepy” and “attractive-unattractive” (Russel & Snodgrass, 1987). Another three semantic differential scales ranged from “important-unimportant”, “valuable-worthless” and “meaningful-meaningless” (Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002).

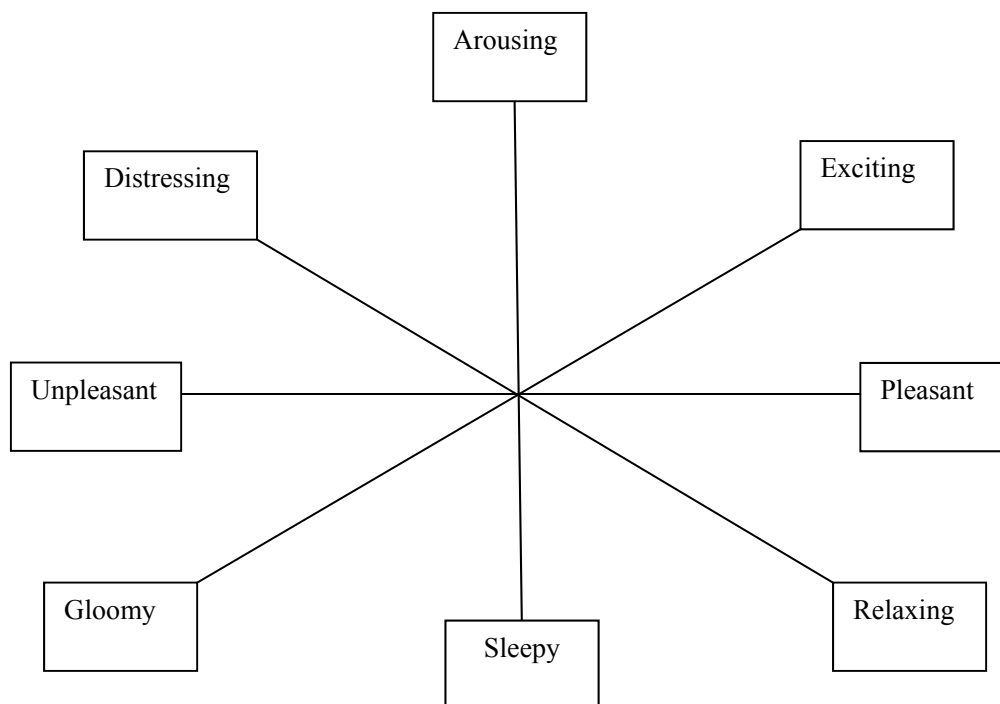


Figure 2. Affective response grid

Source: Adopted from Russel & Snodgrass (1987).

The visitation intention of Gen Y was measured by asking “How likely is it that you will visit the travel destination recommended by the celebrity?” The participants responded using eight items: likely-unlikely, possible-impossible, probable-improbable and willing to visit-unwilling to visit (Van der Veen & Song, 2010). Such items analysed the extent of their visitation intention. Gender, age and past travel experience were used to provide additional background on the respondents (Table 1).

3.3 Pilot Test

A pilot test was organized, and samples were collected from 20 students. On the basis of feedback, wording was adjusted in the final questionnaire.

3.4 Data Collection

All data were coded, analysed and summarised using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics, reliability test and linear regression were calculated and condensed. Reliability assesses the consistency of the variables with respect to the concepts they intend to measure (Hair et al., 2003). Cronbach’s alpha is commonly used to measure the internal stability and consistency of measurement items (Sijtsma, 2009). The extent of the reliability was presented below. Linear regression was employed to evaluate the relationship variables. Celebrity involvement and the eight types of affective image constituted the independent variables, whereas the visitation intention scale generated the dependent variables in the regression analysis for the assessment of the relationship between such involvement and intention.

4. Findings

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of 150 questionnaires were obtained from 46.7% male and 53.3% female respondents. The majority (54%) were aged between 23 and 27, followed by 18 to 22 (34.7%) and 28 to 32 (11.3%) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents (N = 150)

| Demographic variable | Results | |
|----------------------|---------|------|
| | N | % |
| <i>Gender</i> | | |
| Male | 70 | 46.7 |
| Female | 80 | 53.3 |
| <i>Age</i> | | |
| 18–22 | 52 | 34.7 |
| 23–27 | 81 | 54.0 |
| 28–32 | 17 | 11.3 |

4.2 Reliability Test

As mentioned, reliability gauges the consistency of the variables as regards the concepts they intend to measure (Hair et al., 2003). Evaluating the internal stability and consistency of measurement items is typically performed by employing Cronbach's alpha (Sijtsma, 2009). Scale internal consistency was first checked by computing Cronbach's alpha. If Cronbach's alpha for the measuring item is 1, then the results have perfect internal reliability. If the alpha value is 0, then no internal reliability is found. An alpha value of 0.7 or higher indicates a satisfactory level of internal reliability, and 0.6 indicates a moderate level of acceptance (Hair et al., 2003). Cronbach's alpha in this study is 0.954, thereby demonstrating a high level of internal reliability.

4.3 Generation Y's Attitudes Towards Celebrity Involvement

Table 2 shows Gen Y's perception of celebrity involvement. Acceptance (M = 4.15) was rated by Hong Kong Gen Y members as the top ranking item among eight components in their overall perception and attitudes. Attractive perception (M = 3.91) attained second rank. The third one was Dependable (M = 3.87), followed by Positive image towards the destination (M = 3.73), Celebrity life engagement (M = 3.69), Encouragement (M = 3.62), Destination decision (M = 3.30) and travel the destination because of Celebrity involvement (M = 3.22).

Table 2. Generation Y's attitudes towards celebrity involvement

| Variables | Mean | SD |
|--|------|------|
| Destination decision | 3.30 | 1.72 |
| Positive image towards the destination | 3.73 | 1.63 |
| Encouragement | 3.62 | 1.56 |
| Dependable | 3.87 | 1.51 |
| Attractive perception | 3.91 | 1.53 |
| Acceptance | 4.15 | 1.48 |
| Celebrity involvement | 3.22 | 1.81 |
| Celebrity life engagement | 3.69 | 1.94 |

Note. N = 150.

4.4 Generation Y's Affective Image

Table 3 presents the affective image of Gen Y after viewing the travel program including a celebrity. Relaxation (M = 4.81) was rated as the top priority among the eight affective images. The second priority was Attractiveness (M = 4.78). The third one was Pleasant (M = 4.66), followed by Excitement (M = 4.64), Valuable (M = 4.60), Arousing (M = 4.54), Meaningful (M = 4.38) and Important (M = 4.24). It is obvious that the mean was higher than the mean (4.0) of eight affective images.

Table 3. Generation Y's affective image

| Variables | Mean | SD |
|----------------|------|------|
| Pleasant | 4.66 | 1.16 |
| Relaxing | 4.81 | 1.39 |
| Exciting | 4.64 | 1.36 |
| Arousing | 4.54 | 1.27 |
| Attractiveness | 4.78 | 1.34 |
| Important | 4.24 | 1.48 |
| Valuable | 4.60 | 1.34 |
| Meaningful | 4.38 | 1.34 |

Note. N=150.

4.5 Generation Y's Visitation Intention

Table 4 describes the extent of Gen Y's visitation intention. The respondents rated Likely to visit ($M = 4.69$) as their top priority. The second priority was willing to visit ($M = 4.61$) and possible to visit ($M = 6.61$), followed by probable to visit ($M = 4.47$).

Table 4. Generation Y's visitation intention

| Variables | Mean | SD |
|-------------------|------|------|
| Likely to visit | 4.69 | 1.39 |
| Possible to visit | 4.61 | 1.35 |
| Probable to visit | 4.47 | 1.37 |
| Willing to visit | 4.61 | 1.30 |

Note. $N=150$.

4.6 Simple Linear Regression Analysis

To investigate how celebrity involvement influences affective image and visitation intention, this study adopted linear regression for the analysis of the relationship of celebrity involvement, affective image and visitation intention. Independent and dependent variables were incorporated into the simple linear regression model to evaluate their interrelationships.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that "celebrity involvement" has a positive influence on "affective image" towards Gen Y. Simple linear regression revealed a positive association ($\beta = 0.649$, $p \leq 0.01$) between "celebrity involvement" and "affective image towards Generation Y." Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that favourable "affective image" exerts a positive influence on the "visit intention" of Gen Y. The same procedures and linear regression analysis were applied to test whether a positive relationship exists between "affective image" and "visit intention." Linear regression confirmed such positive relationship ($\beta = 0.649$, $p \leq 0.01$). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that a positive relationship is found between "celebrity involvement" and Gen Y's "visit intention." Linear regression analysis was utilized. Results confirmed a positive relationship between "celebrity involvement" and Gen Y's "visit intention" ($\beta = 0.661$, $p \leq 0.01$). Hypothesis 3 was also supported.

Table 5 summarizes the results of linear regression analysis in this study. As shown, all hypotheses (H1 to H3) were supported.

Table 5. Linear regression results

| Hypotheses | Results | Supported/rejected |
|------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| H1 | $\beta = 0.649$, $p \leq 0.01$ | Supported |
| H2 | $\beta = 0.649$, $p \leq 0.01$ | Supported |
| H3 | $\beta = 0.661$, $p \leq 0.01$ | Supported |

5. Discussion and Implications

The findings of this study support the hypotheses explaining the effect of celebrity involvement on people's perceptions, attitudes, affective images and their visitation intentions.

This investigation postulated that celebrity involvement influences Gen Y's affective image. Data demonstrated that such variables had a significant relationship. Celebrity involvement in the travel programme positively influences their affective image towards the travel destination. After watching the travel television programme, the majority of Gen Y described the destination as pleasant and exciting. The valuable information on the travel destination was useful for them. Thus, celebrities can produce positive feelings or attitudes in the target customers to generate a favourable response towards the organization (Till, Priluek, & Stanley, 2008).

5.1 Implications for Marketers

This research affirms several practical implications for marketers. This study confirmed that a favourable affective image influences the visitation intention of Gen Y. The confirmation of this hypothesis is the most significant relationship in the context of the current conceptual framework. The present study verified that favourable affective image is directly linked to visitation intention and that they have a significant relationship

with each other. High favourable affective image enhances the willingness of Gen Y to visit the travel destination. Hence, if people have a positive image, then they are more likely to visit the travel destination in future, as consistent with previous findings (Lee, Scott, & Kim, 2008). Hence, affective image is the most important factor to predict Gen Y's destination choice.

Hypothetically, celebrity involvement influences Gen Y's visitation intention. Findings confirmed that celebrity involvement affects Gen Y visitation intention. However, several respondents indicated that they would not visit the travel destination because of celebrities. Therefore, celebrity involvement might not motivate Gen Y to go to the travel destination.

For marketers, selecting the appropriate celebrities is crucial in addition to ensuring that the endorsement of the celebrities has a positive image and word of mouth. Doing so enables them to convince Gen Y to buy tourism products. Notice that tourism products and destination choice entail a high-involvement purchase intention in which the purchaser has limited product knowledge about an important decision. Therefore, choosing the right celebrity can provide the most salient characteristics in enduring involvement and lead to enhancing knowledge and activity in a destination. Although celebrity involvement might not be a main reason motivating Gen Y to visit a travel destination, it increases the perception level of acceptance towards the travel destination. Celebrities are also known as endorsers who are used to enhance people's acceptance (Baker & Churchill, 1977). That condition explains why celebrity involvement exerts a certain significant level of influence in tourism advertisement.

In terms of recommendations, destination marketers should invite a native celebrity of the travel destination for promoting the tourism products instead of a non-native counterpart. Such choice not only increases the attractiveness of the destination, but also generates a positive image and acceptance of the travel destination. For instance, Song Joong Ki, who was invited as an endorser by Jeju Air, expanded the exposure of the destination and promoted South Korea to South Asia. Choi, Lee, & Kim (2005) verified that domestic celebrities of the travel destination deliver a positive attitude and enhance the level of believability more effectively than other endorsers.

Furthermore, results corroborated that Gen Y was familiar with celebrities as they observe them promote tourism destinations via TV and other social media platforms. Marketers must study the media habits and behaviours of Gen Y. Studies affirm that Gen Y is fond of using the Internet and social media platforms. Considering appropriate channels (e.g., Facebook and IG) to use as promotion tools is crucial for generating influence and creating extensive WOM and e-fluentials about the destination.

Although celebrity endorsement was confirmed to affect Gen Y and their visiting intention, visiting intention may not transform into "real" purchase behaviour. Accordingly, marketers may need considerably in-depth analysis on how to apply appropriate marketing mix activities to turn Gen Y visiting intention into purchase behaviour.

6. Limitation and Future Research

As this study was conducted in the end of the semester, a minimal sampling size was obtained. Moreover, data were collected at the Hong Kong International Airport, resulting in participants limited to Gen Y members who travel by air transportation. The respondents may not represent their Gen Y contemporaries who travel through other types of public transport. Opinions of the latter Gen Y travellers may also differ from those expressed in this study. Another limitation of the current research is that several respondents dislike To Yu Fung, the celebrity in the travel program. Hence, the attitude towards celebrity involvement and the affective image of those respondents might decrease.

Celebrity endorsement affects destination image and visiting intentions, but turning visiting intention to purchase behaviour requires further investigation. Therefore, exploring how to turn their attitudes (visiting intention) to action (purchase behaviour) is a worthwhile future endeavour.

In this research, Gen Y was chosen as a specific group for its potential as regards purchasing in the tourism industry. Materialism grows rapidly at present. Generation "2000" is believed to become future masters and spend additional money in leisure activities. Hence, the relationship between celebrity involvement and the visit intention of Generation "2000" should be investigated in future.

7. Conclusion

Celebrity involvement affects the visitation intention of Generation Y. Celebrities influence the affective image of such group. A favourable affective image influences their visitation intention. Affective image towards the destination is a significant determinant for predicting the destination choice of Gen Y. Destination marketers

must, therefore, invite a domestic celebrity for endorsing tourism products. Consequently, Gen Y would have positive perceptions and attitudes towards travel destinations.

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