

## THE EFFECT OF CELEBRITY ENDORSER ATTRIBUTES, ISSUE INVOLVEMENT AND PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT ON ATTITUDE TOWARDS ORGAN DONATION REGISTRATION

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### ABSTRACT

Celebrity endorsement has been extensively used in both profit and non-profit marketing. However, the effectiveness of the marketing strategy in the non-profit context is not clear. In generating a positive attitude towards organ donation registration, health and science literature have suggested the use of celebrity endorser. In addition, issue involvement is also assumed to yield a favourable attitude towards organ donation. Furthermore, the influence of perceived social support has been greatly discussed in the organ donation literature. Despite these phenomena discussed in the literature, the role of the three variables on attitude towards organ donation registration is ambiguous. Thus, this paper is aimed to investigate the effect of celebrity endorser, issue involvement and perceived social support towards attitude. Data from 466 university students were gathered using purposive sampling. IBM SPSS Statistic 23 and SmartPLS 3.0 were utilized in data analysis. The findings from this paper showed that likeability, trustworthiness and issue involvement generate a positive attitude towards organ donation registration. Implications of this research to both practical and future research are also discussed. This paper hopes to increase researchers' interest to further investigate and contribute to the literature of organ donation in the context of social marketing.

**KEYWORDS:** *Celebrity Endorsement, Issue Involvement, Perceived Social Support, Attitude towards Organ Donation Registration*

### INTRODUCTION

Malaysia has been listed as among the countries with the lowest organ donation rate (Sivanandam, Rahimy, and Yunus, 2017). Although there have been numerous campaigns organized to promote organ donation and transplantation, up until now only 1% of Malaysian's

population has registered as organ pledgers (“Statistic Organ Pledgers”, 2015). The Ministry of Health Malaysia has selected celebrities, sports figure and religious leaders to become icons for organ donation campaign. However, the effectiveness of such campaign has not been determined. In the literature, the effect of celebrity endorsement in commercial marketing received a great attention. However, the impact of celebrity endorser in the non-profit marketing is still ambiguous (Stebbins and Hartman, 2013). Earlier studies on celebrity endorsement in the context of non-profit discussed the impact of celebrity match-up with non-profit organization (Walker, Langmeyer and Langmeyer, 1992), the effect of celebrity-charity co-branding fit on perceived philanthropy (Ilicic and Baxter, 2014), the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement (Shead, Walsh, Taylor and Gupta, 2011) but not much discussions could be found on the impact of the celebrity attributes towards attitude. While mixed findings were found on the effect of celebrity endorser attributes in the commercial marketing literature, the discussions on impact of celebrity endorser attributes in non-profit area are still lacking, especially in the context of organ donation. In addition, high involvement was cited to greatly influence helping behaviour which foster positive attitude towards organ donation (Bae, 2008; Skumanich and Kintsfather, 1996). In a Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), attitude is defined as an evaluation of the consequences of performing a particular behaviour while subjective norm summarizes perceived social support one receives for performing a particular behaviour (Newton, Newton, Ewing, Burney, and Hay, 2013). Nevertheless, in most of the attitude-intention studies, perceived social support has commonly been tested as predictor to intention. There is not much discussion established on the effect of perceived social support towards attitude. Therefore, this paper will specifically address how the relationship of celebrity endorser attributes, issue involvement and perceived social support on attitude towards registration for organ donation. This paper contributes to the existing organ donation and social marketing literature as it examines the effects of these three variables within a causal framework. Empirical tests of the model will be useful because it allows researchers to test all variables simultaneously, contributing to a richer insights overview of the dynamic of organ donation processes taking place.

This paper is organized and structured into seven main sections. The first section is to discuss the background of the study and this is followed by the second section which is the literature review. The research methodology and result are presented in section three and four respectively. Next, discussion and implications are explained in section five and six. Lastly, this paper ends with a conclusion at the closing section.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Celebrity Endorser Attributes*

In the literature, attractiveness and credibility have extensively been studied in the celebrity endorsement literature (Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999; Petty and Cacioppo, 1984). Kahle and Homer (1985) stated that attractiveness enhance the ability of the message recipients to like a product. Message recipients are predicted to like a product because they are attracted to a source message. Most of the previous works studied on the effect of attractiveness towards attitude in profit settings (Till and Busler, 2000; Erdogan, 1999; Petty and Cacioppo, 1984). Attractiveness in the literature has been alleged as an important character of a source message (Chao, Wuhner and Werani, 2005) in changing attitudes of targeted audience (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981). Trustworthiness is defined as the level of confidence a person has towards a source message (Ohanian, 1990) and Erdogan (1990) characterized it as honesty, integrity and believability. Although most studies on trustworthiness have shown the positive effects of trustworthiness towards attitude (Ohanian, 1991; Kim, 2012; Lien 2001), some studies do not support the positive effect of the trustworthiness. Source message with low trustworthiness was

reported to generate positive feelings (Priester and Petty, 2003). Meanwhile, in the literature where expertise is referred to being authoritative, competent and qualified (McCroskey and Young, 2009), researchers have found the positive impact of expertise towards attitude (Chaiken, 1980; Petty, Cacioppo, and Goldman, 1981). Nevertheless, Ohanian (1990) believes that expertise is not a key factor in persuading target audience. In a recent study by Wan and Zhang (2015), expertise and trustworthiness were seen as important factors than attractiveness in determining credibility of a product. Apart from that, similarity is also mentioned in the literature as an essential factor of a source message (McGuire, 1985). According to Fan and Jiang (2015), similarity is the likeness between a source model and the targeted audience. Fan and Jiang (2015) believe that when a targeted audience thinks that the source message has the same similarities as the person, he or she is more likely to project similar opinions as the source message. Hoffner and Buchanan (2005) state that due to the perceived similarities the desire to emulate the behaviour of the source message can be enhanced among the target audience. But, different findings were found in relation of similarities and low-preference products. Consumers demonstrate positive feelings towards low-preference products if they found dissimilarities with a source message (Feick and Higie, 1992; Crano and Hannula-Bral 1994). Kim, Shi and Capella (2016) also highlighted the effect of dissimilarities effect on anti-smoking advertisement and thus, created debate on the effect of similarity towards attitude in the non-profit context. Likeability is the ability to like a source message because of his/her qualification, appearance or behaviour (McGuire, 1985). In the literature, likeability is largely discussed as the predictor to attractiveness (Bekk and Spörrle, 2010; Erdogan, 1999; Kahle and Homer, 1985) but in other studies, likeability is found to have a greater impact as predictor than attractiveness and trustworthiness (Bekk and Spörrle, 2010). Given the above-mentioned phenomenon, therefore, the hypotheses for celebrity endorser attribute in this paper is derived as follow:

*H<sub>1</sub>: celebrity attractiveness has a positive effect towards attitude*

*H<sub>2</sub>: celebrity trustworthiness has a positive effect towards attitude*

*H<sub>3</sub>: celebrity expertise has a positive effect towards attitude*

*H<sub>4</sub>: celebrity similarity has a positive effect towards attitude*

*H<sub>5</sub>: celebrity likeability has a positive effect towards attitude*

#### *Issue Involvement*

Involvement is the relevance and importance a person place towards certain object (Petty and Cacioppo, 1979). Meanwhile, issue involvement is explained as the personal importance individual holds on certain behavioural issues. Previous studies have shown the impact of issue involvement in message processing. According to Petty et al., (1983), target audience who has low issue involvement, is easily persuaded by peripheral cues such as the context, feelings and emotions aroused by the message. But, if he or she is highly-involved with an issue, he or she will think about the message and be more likely to elaborate the message and thus, influence his or her attitude towards the issue. Issue involvement is mentioned as a main variable contributing to message processing and elaboration. In addition, even though issue involvement has been reported to have a positive effect on intention to donate organs (Sun, 2014), there is limited evidence on how issue involvement affect attitude towards organ donation registration. Therefore, the paper is aimed to address this gap and hence, our hypothesis is:

*H<sub>6</sub>: Issue involvement has a positive attitude towards organ donation registration*

#### *Perceived Social Support*

Subjective norm or perceived social support refers to the support or assistance one thinks that he or she will receive from family or friends for performing a particular behaviour (Newton, Newton, Ewing, Burney, and Hay, 2013). According to Peltier, Allesandro, Dahl and Feeley

(2012), college students have shown that their communications with others are important to their action taking. Perceived social support is important to reduce psychological barriers to register as organ donors and to have a direct effect towards actual registration behaviour (Peltier, Allesandro, Dahl and Feeley, 2012). Previous scholars have found the evidence on the influence of perceived social support on intention. Nevertheless, the role of perceived social support on shaping attitude towards organ donation registration is unclear. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the effect of perceived social support in attitude and develop a hypothesis as follow:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Perceived Social Support has a positive attitude towards organ donation registration*

*Attitude*

Attitude is a general evaluation a person has towards another person, objects, or any issue (Petty and Wegener, 1998). The process of changing attitude involves persuasion and it involves cognitive, affective and behavioural components (Cooper and Fazio, 1984). Attitude can be favourable or unfavourable (Fazio, 1995) and can be weak or strong (Petty and Cacioppo, 1984). Attitude change relies on the ability to process a message either through peripheral or central route (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981). In intention studies, attitude is commonly constructed as a mediator, and this is not limited to marketing literature but also has been widely practiced in other studies (Chan, Ng and Luk, 2013; Falomir-Pichastor, Berent, and Pereira, 2013). A review of related literature has evidently shown that positive attitude towards organ donation has lead to the intention to pledge as organ donors (Morgan, Miller, and Arasaratnam, 2002). Hence, using this as the basis of this research, this paper aims to investigate the effect of celebrity endorser attributes, issue involvement and perceived social support on attitude towards organ donation registration.

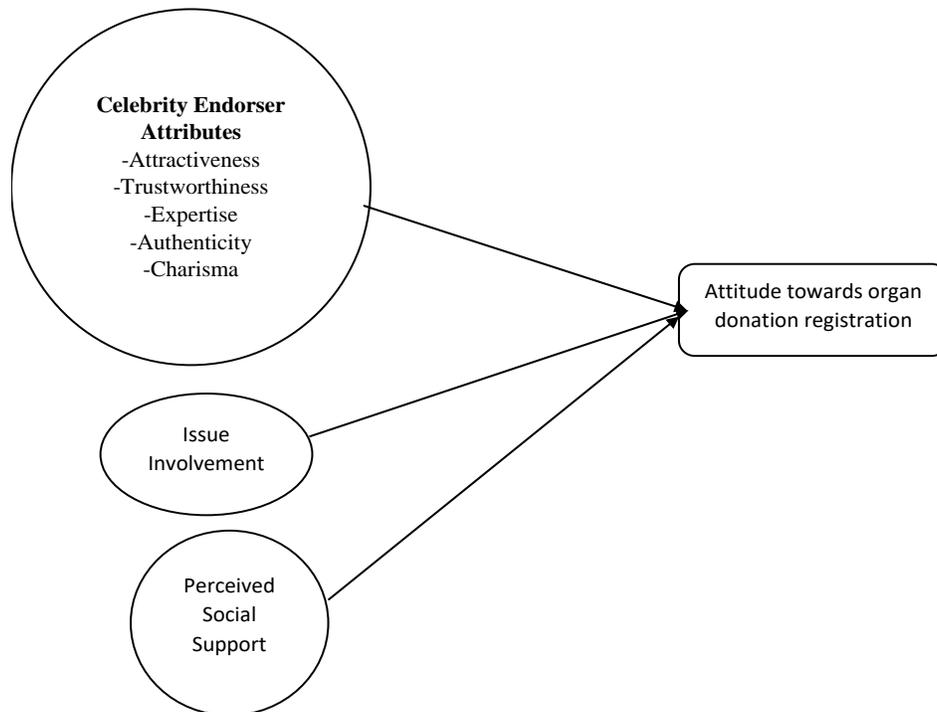


Figure 1. Research Framework

### *Research Model*

This paper adopted the Tri-Partite Model which discusses the power of effect which produces attitude changes. There are three components in the model which consist of thinking, feeling and behaviour. The underlying reasons to develop the framework based on this model are due to the attributes which describe the consumers' behaviours, particularly, when they are exposed to a stimulus like an advertisement. In addition, two variables, i.e. issue involvement and perceived social support were also added to the model to test the effects of these variables on attitude.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Population and Sample Size*

This paper employed purposive sampling and targeted undergraduate students as the sample of study. Data were collected in seven public universities in Malaysia. The sample size for this study was determined using the *Gpower* software. Because 7 predictors were analysed in this study, the effect size was established at 0.02 (small) and the power required was established at 0.95 and the sample size was equal to 74. Hence, it was decided to collect data greater than the minimum number.

### *Instrument and Measures*

Questionnaires were used in this study to obtain information from the respondents. During the data collection, an organ donation advertisement featuring the organ donation icons appointed by the Ministry of Health Malaysia was shown to the respondents. The respondents were asked to answer the questions based on the advertisement. In this study, attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise attributes are measured by adapting from Ohanian (1990). Meanwhile, the items to measure similarity and likeability are adapted from Peetz (2012) and Wymer and Drollinger (2014) respectively. Issue involvement is operationalised to determine one's involvement in organ donation issues and this variable is measured by borrowing from Sun (2014). In addition, the measurement items for perceived social support and attitude are adapted from Pelteir et al., (2012) and Siegel, Navarro, Tan and Hyde (2014). All items are constructed to suit the organ donation context and are measured using five-point Likert Scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5).

### *Data Analysis*

Data of 466 university students were gathered and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 23.0 and SmartPLS 3.0. The result of Harman Single Factor for this study is 28.73% which indicates that this data do not suffer from common method bias issue. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents in this study. The largest group of the sample was those age of 21-year olds (25.3%).

In the demographic analysis, female with 81.8% dominated the respondents while male respondents only made up 18.2%. Findings in Table 1 also show that the respondents come from different educational background i.e. social science and science students.

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age	18	11	2.4	2.4
	19	110	23.6	26
	20	112	24.0	50
	21	118	25.3	75.3
	22	86	18.5	93.8
	23	11	2.4	96.1
	24	11	2.4	98.5
	25	5	1.1	99.6
	26	2	0.4	100.0
	Total	466	100.0	
Gender	Male	85	18.2	18.2
	Female	381	81.8	100.0
	Total	466	100.0	
Faculty	Management	103	22.1	22.1
	Computer Science & Technology	27	5.8	27.9
	Modern Language & Communication	11	2.4	30.3
	Engineering	51	10.9	41.2
	Economics and Business	66	14.2	55.4
	Social Science	46	9.9	65.2
	Medicine & Health Science	73	15.7	80.9
	Science	45	9.7	90.6
	Technology Management and Business	44	9.4	100.0
	Total	466	100.0	

## RESULTS

Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, and Thiele (2017) and Cain, Zhang, and Yuan, (2016) suggested that the multivariate skewness and kurtosis need to be assessed to determine the data distribution. Therefore, the data were assessed using the software available at: <https://webpower.psychstat.org/models/kurtosis/results.php?url=1da407a37c993949f1d8e61aa3b1537e>. The results showed that the data collected were not multivariate normal, Mardia's multivariate skewness ( $\beta = 3.707$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and Mardia's multivariate kurtosis ( $\beta = 89.856$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), thus SmartPLS which is a non-parametric analysis software was then used. In analysing the research model, the Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis was utilized using the Smart PLS 3.0 software.

Examinations of cross loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) were performed to determine the validity of the measurement model as recommended by Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, and Kuppelwieser (2014). The loadings should be  $> 0.70$ , Composite Reliability (CR)  $> 0.70$  and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)  $> 0.50$ . Nevertheless, outer loading values equal to and greater than 0.4 were adequate and provided the summation of loadings result in high loading scores lead to Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores greater than 0.5 (Hulland, 1999). As shown in the Table 2, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was greater than 0.5 and the Composite Reliability (CR) in the result was greater than 0.70. All loadings were found to be above the cut-off values.

In defining the discriminant validity, Fornell and Larcker (1981) advise that indicators should load more strongly on their own constructs than other constructs in the model, and the average variance shared between each construct and its measures should be larger than the variance shared between the construct and other constructs. Table 3 shows that all square roots of the

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (bolded) are bigger than the off-diagonal correlation values, signifying that the constructs are clearly different from each other. Hence, it can be assumed that the measures used in this study demonstrate satisfactory validity and reliability. In addition, due to the disapproval on the usage of Fornell-Larcker's (1981) criterion to detect discriminant validity, this paper referred to the suggestion by Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2015) to evaluate discriminant validity using Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT). Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) were valued bigger than Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT)<sub>0.85</sub> value of 0.85 (Kline, 2011) or HTMT<sub>0.90</sub> value of 0.90 (Gold, Malhotra and Segars, 2001) indicates that the data are free from discriminant validity problem.

Table 2. Measurement Model

Construct	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
ATR1	0.762	0.75	0.841	0.569
ATR2	0.78			
ATR3	0.769			
ATR4	0.704			
ATT1	0.729	0.771	0.845	0.525
ATT3	0.742			
ATT4	0.792			
ATT5	0.762			
ATT6	0.579			
EXP1	0.755	0.891	0.914	0.602
EXP2	0.768			
EXP3	0.784			
EXP4	0.76			
EXP5	0.813			
EXP6	0.777			
EXP7	0.772			
ISI1	0.804	0.905	0.929	0.725
ISI2	0.89			
ISI3	0.858			
ISI4	0.831			
ISI5	0.871			
LIK1	0.799	0.748	0.841	0.571
LIK2	0.804			
LIK3	0.697			
LIK4	0.716			
PSS1	0.759	0.809	0.869	0.576
PSS2	0.845			
PSS3	0.822			
PSS4	0.793			
PSS5	0.535			
SIM1	0.765	0.881	0.909	0.627
SIM2	0.823			
SIM3	0.791			
SIM4	0.858			
SIM5	0.797			
SIM6	0.707			
TRU1	0.846	0.917	0.938	0.751
TRU2	0.889			
TRU3	0.888			
TRU4	0.85			
TRU5	0.858			

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT)

Construct	ATT	ATR	EXP	ISI	LIK	PSS	SIM	TRU
Attitude								
Attractiveness	0.337							
Expertise	0.371	0.465						
Issue Involvement	0.709	0.209	0.256					
Likeability	0.59	0.673	0.521	0.427				
Perceived Social Support	0.482	0.192	0.227	0.555	0.317			
Similarity	0.445	0.336	0.276	0.516	0.481	0.43		
Trustworthiness	0.428	0.401	0.658	0.268	0.685	0.288	0.273	

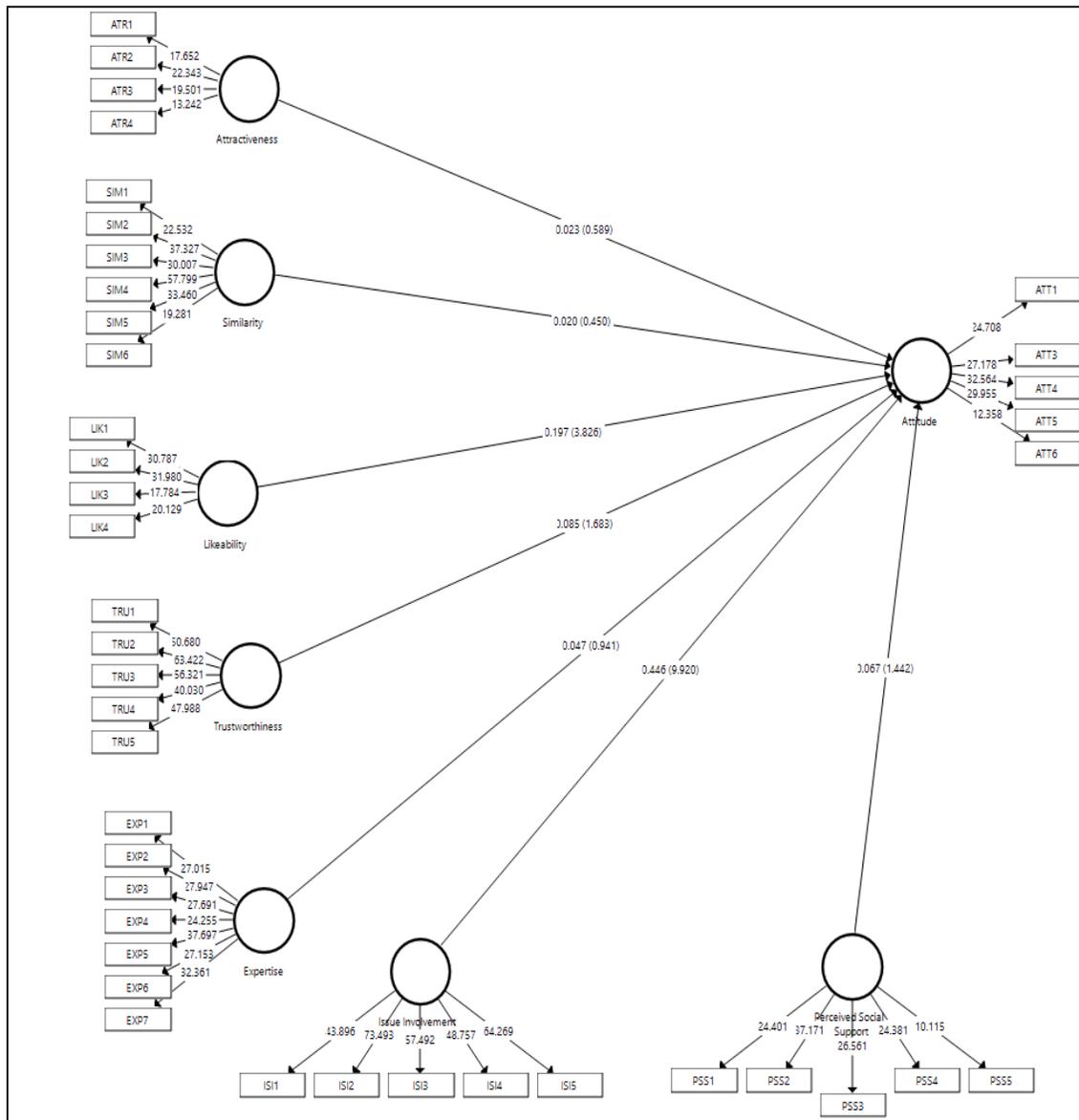


Figure 2. Hypotheses Testing

Next, following Hair et al. (2014) the hypotheses developed in this study were tested using a bootstrapping procedure with a resample of 5,000. The  $R^2$  for attitude is 0.432 and is acceptable following the suggestion by Cohen (1988). The results in Table 4 show that the assessment of the path coefficient exhibits that only three relationships are found to have  $t$ -value greater than 1.645. The predictors are trustworthiness ( $\beta = 0.085$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), likeability ( $\beta = 0.197$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and issue involvement ( $\beta = 0.446$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Trustworthiness, likeability and issue involvement are found to be positively related to attitude, which explains 43.2% of variances in attitude. Thus, H2, H5, and H6 are supported. The effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) for likeability and issue involvement relationships achieved at least the small effect size of 0.02 as suggested by Cohen (1988) but not for trustworthiness. The  $Q^2$  value is greater than 0 which indicates that there is predictive relevance (Hair et al. 2014; Fornell and Cha, 1994). The final research model is shown in figure 2.

Table 4. Hypotheses testing

	Relationship	Std beta	SE	$t$ -value	5.00%	95.00%	Decision
H1	Attractiveness -> Attitude	0.023	0.04	0.589	-0.045	0.088	NS
H2	Trustworthiness -> Attitude	0.085	0.051	1.683*	0.007	0.175	supported
H3	Expertise -> Attitude	0.047	0.05	0.941	-0.038	0.123	NS
H4	Similarity -> Attitude	0.02	0.045	0.45	-0.054	0.097	NS
H5	Likeability -> Attitude	0.197	0.051	3.826**	0.11	0.278	supported
H6	Issue Involvement -> Attitude	0.446	0.045	9.92**	0.372	0.518	supported
H7	Perceived Social Support -> Attitude	0.067	0.047	1.442	-0.014	0.139	NS

*SE = Std Error; NS = Not supported.*

Table 5. The results of  $r^2$ ,  $f^2$  and  $Q^2$ .

	Relationship	$R^2$	$f^2$	$Q^2$
H1	Attractiveness -> Attitude	0.432	0.001	0.213
H2	Trustworthiness -> Attitude		0.007	
H3	Expertise -> Attitude		0.002	
H4	Similarity -> Attitude		0.001	
H5	Likeability -> Attitude		0.036	
H6	Issue Involvement -> Attitude		0.232	
H7	Perceived Social Support -> Attitude		0.006	

## DISCUSSION

This section discusses the contributions gathered from this study. Firstly, the Tri-Partite Model was used in the organ donation context. This finding adds to the literature by testing issue involvement and perceived social support in the model and it was found that only issue involvement has an influence on attitude towards organ donation. The findings could not support the effect of perceived social support on attitude towards organ donation registration because the impact of perceived social support is not significant towards attitude. According to Bae (2008), the higher an individual is involved in an issue, the higher his or her attitude will be. Meanwhile, the insignificant effect of perceived social support could be possibly explained by referring to Povey, Connors, Sparks, James and Shepperd (2000). The researchers argue that perceived social support is a component of social influence and should be a moderator between attitude and intention. Therefore, future research should be conducted to investigate the moderating role of perceived social support between the relationship of attitude and intention.

Secondly, it was found that among all the celebrity endorser attributes studied in this paper, only two variables were found significant. The variables are likeability and trustworthiness. This signifies that the celebrity likeability and trustworthiness are important to generate positive attitude towards organ donation registration. Attractiveness and likeability are different. While the first one refers to the physical attractiveness, the latter i.e. likeability means the inner beauty a person possess which evokes the feeling of liking. In collectivist countries such as Malaysia, audience were reported to favour a source message with a likeable personality i.e. warmth, agreeableness and friendly and used these factors in their important personal decision (Levine, Sato, Hashimoto, and Verma, 1995). Trustworthiness is also found to be significant which demonstrates that celebrity trustworthiness is salient compared to other attributes. However, the effect size is very weak compared to likeability which achieved medium effect size. But, on top of all, issue involvement was found to have bigger effect size compared to other variables which indicates that issue involvement has a large effect size towards attitude.

## **IMPLICATION**

This paper discusses the celebrity endorser attributes i.e. attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, similarity and likeability, issue involvement and perceived social support on attitude towards organ donation registration. This paper significantly makes a unique contribution to the literature as it tested the variables mentioned simultaneously and thus, studied the effect of these variables on attitude. It was also found that likeability and trustworthiness have impacts on attitude which means that these attributes are important when selecting celebrity to endorse a social campaign, particularly organ donation. The findings also showed that issue involvement is a key factor in shaping positive attitude towards organ donation registration. However, the direct effect of perceived social support on attitude was not found in this study. Thus, it can be said that relevant agencies and social marketers might benefit from this study as they need to understand that selecting celebrity as endorser to a social cause is not a simple task. Identifying their target audience is crucial before they appoint any celebrities. Different type of audience has diverse needs and hence, the marketing communication campaign approach must cater to these needs. These findings can also be a useful platform for future studies. It is suggested for interested researchers to pursue this work by adding other attributes such as congruence and familiarity to the celebrity endorser attributes and by investigating perceived social support as a moderator.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study still has avenue for improvements. The majority of the respondents in this study are female. But the current gender parity index which shows that females are dominating the populations in public universities could help explain this. In addition, this paper only measures the attitude towards organ donation registration among university students. Future works should replicate this study by investigating other target populations such as working adults. To sum up, this paper extends the existing literature on celebrity endorsement in the organ donation context by measuring the impact of the celebrity attributes and the direct effect of issue involvement and perceived social support. This paper also provides support on the direct effect of likeability, trustworthiness and issue involvement on attitude and confirms that issue involvement is a strong predictor to attitude.

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