

The Impact of Public Figures, Words, and Ads on Esse Cigarette's International Marketing Strategy

Lambok Manurung¹
Universitas Battuta¹

Correspondence: manurunglambok66@gmail.com¹

Received : July 20, 2024

Accepted : November 1, 2024

Published : November 31, 2024

Citation: Manurung, L. (2024). The Impact of Public Figures, Words, and Ads on Esse Cigarette's International Marketing Strategy. *Sinergi International Journal of Economics*, 2(3), 216 - 225.

ABSTRACT: This study investigates the influence of public figures and word choice in marketing strategies on consumer behavior, particularly in the tobacco industry in Indonesia. Focusing on the Esse cigarette brand by KT&G, the research explores how celebrities and commercial advertising influence consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions. The study addresses the research problem of understanding the combined impact of public figures and language in marketing on consumer behavior, specifically in the context of kretek cigarettes. Using a qualitative approach and an exploratory, descriptive method, data were collected through in-depth interviews with 50 active smokers and ten retail outlets in Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, and Makassar. Thematic analysis was applied to interpret consumer experiences and perceptions. The results reveal that using personal language in copywriting, emotional taglines, and celebrities as brand ambassadors significantly increases consumer interest and purchasing decisions. Television and social media ads were identified as the most influential media, with a 25% increase in sales following celebrity endorsements. The study concludes that marketing strategies utilizing emotional appeals and public figures effectively enhance consumer engagement and drive sales, particularly in Indonesia's competitive cigarette market.

Keywords: Marketing Strategy, Public Figures, Consumer Behavior, Cigarette Advertising.



This is an open-access article under the CC-BY 4.0 license

INTRODUCTION

Marketing strategies that involve public figures and carefully chosen wording in brand communications significantly influence consumer attitudes and behavior. The presence of celebrities as public figures and the power of strategic word choices in marketing campaigns play a key role in shaping how consumers perceive products. Research indicates that public figures can enhance a product's appeal and strengthen the emotional connection between consumers and brands (Pradhan et al., 2016; Dwivedi et al., 2018). Furthermore, using effective wording in marketing strategies helps build a strong brand identity, directly influencing consumers' purchasing decisions (Kumar & Singh, 2021).

Several studies have confirmed that product popularity often stems from associations built through marketing strategies involving famous individuals. For example, a survey by Dwivedi et al. (2018) found that the involvement of public figures in product promotions creates social validation and enhances brand trust. In such cases, marketing communications provide information about the product and foster a sense of connection between the seller and potential

buyers. This is particularly relevant in the cigarette industry, where successful communication can significantly impact consumer perceptions and behavior (Lee et al., 2020).

The research focuses on the marketing strategies of KT&G, a prominent South Korean company, mainly promoting its international cigarette brand, Esse. KT&G competes with global brands such as Philip Morris International and British American Tobacco and has expanded into international markets, including Indonesia, by adopting innovative marketing strategies (Nguyen et al., 2022). Following its acquisition of PT Tri Sakti Purwosari Makmur in 2011, KT&G gained significant market access to the kretek cigarette sector in Indonesia. This acquisition allowed KT&G to penetrate further the growing Indonesian market, where over 70% of Southeast Asians are smokers, making marketing strategies involving advertisements and public figures essential for consumer attraction (Lee et al., 2020; Kumar & Singh, 2021).

This study aims to explore the influence of public figures and word choice in cigarette marketing campaigns, filling a gap in the literature that lacks focus on the combined impact of these two factors. While existing research has examined public figures' influence on marketing, this study further analyzes how public figures, combined with strategic communication, shape consumer purchasing decisions, particularly in the Indonesian cigarette market. Kumar & Singh (2021) emphasize the importance of adapting marketing strategies in global contexts, and this research extends the discussion to focus on the role of word choice and communication strategies.

The primary objective of this study is to assess how public figures and carefully selected words in advertisements influence consumer behavior. Specifically, this study addresses how such marketing strategies impact consumer purchasing decisions in Indonesia. It offers new insights into how international tobacco companies adapt their marketing strategies to compete in local markets (Pradhan et al., 2016; Nguyen et al., 2022).

METHOD

The study utilized thematic analysis to explore the impact of public figures, word choice, and commercial advertisements on the marketing strategies of international cigarette brands, focusing on the Esse brand in Indonesia. Thematic analysis, as defined by Braun and Clarke (2006), is a qualitative method that identifies, analyzes, and reports patterns or themes within data. The process began with data familiarization, during which researchers immersed themselves in the interview transcripts and questionnaire responses to gain an overarching understanding of the content. This stage allowed the identification of initial impressions, such as recurring references to marketing strategies, public figures' role, and persuasive language's effectiveness (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The second step involved generating initial codes by systematically highlighting key data segments relevant to the research question. For instance, responses like "I trust the product more because a celebrity endorses it" were coded under public figures. At the same time, comments about the wording in advertisements creating a "premium" feel were categorized under word choice. These codes were organized into categories such as public figures, word choice, commercial advertisements, and consumer behavior.

The next phase focused on searching for themes by grouping related codes into broader patterns that captured significant insights about the data. Themes like "Trust and Credibility from Public Figures" and "Emotional and Persuasive Language" emerged, reflecting how celebrities influenced purchasing decisions and how carefully chosen words resonated with consumers.

Additionally, themes like "Advertising Formats and Their Effectiveness" and "Cultural Relevance of Advertisements" highlighted the comparative impact of traditional versus digital media and the importance of localized marketing efforts tailored to Indonesian consumers.

Once themes were identified, they were reviewed for accuracy and relevance. Themes were refined, combined, or discarded based on their coherence with the data. For example, after examining their implications for brand loyalty and purchasing habits, some data initially categorized under commercial advertisements were reassigned to consumer behavior. Finally, each theme was carefully defined and named to reflect its core idea, resulting in clear and concise narratives that directly addressed the research question about the influence of marketing strategies on consumer behavior in Indonesia's cigarette market.

To strengthen the validity of the findings, this study utilized data triangulation, comparing insights from various sources—Esse cigarette consumers and outlet partnerships. Triangulation ensures that the data derived from different respondents or data collection methods align and reinforce the research outcomes.

1. Comparison Between Consumer and Outlet Data

Consumers' Perspectives: In-depth interviews provided firsthand insights into their experiences and perceptions of Esse's marketing strategies. For example, many consumers mentioned the positive association with celebrities in the advertisements, which increased their trust and engagement with the brand.

Outlets' Perspectives: Data from owners or managers of outlet partnerships added another layer of understanding, particularly on the effectiveness of advertisements from a retail perspective. Many outlet managers noticed increased demand following the launch of ads featuring public figures. They also commented on how consumers were drawn to specific wording in the promotional materials, reinforcing brand identity and encouraging purchase decisions.

The research aimed to cross-validate the themes by comparing the findings from these two groups. If a pattern appeared in consumer and outlet interviews, such as the importance of public figures in creating brand credibility, this pattern was considered more robust. For instance, consumers noted the trust they placed in the product due to celebrity endorsements. Similarly, outlets observed that products associated with public figures sold better, confirming the mutual influence on consumer behavior.

2. Confirming the Role of Advertising

The data collected from both consumers and outlets corroborated the role of advertising as an effective driver of consumer behavior. While consumers discussed how certain advertisements motivated them to purchase Esse products, outlet managers provided data on sales spikes following advertisement campaigns. This comparison provided a comprehensive understanding of how marketing strategies worked from both the consumer and retail sides.

This study examines the influence of marketing strategies on the effectiveness of Esse cigarette product sales in Medan City. The author visited the Esse office and analyzed promotional content, including television commercials (TVC) and social media platforms.

Based on this study, several important points were found related to the marketing strategy implemented by Esse, especially in the use of words, public figures as brand ambassadors, and commercial advertisements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Influence of Words in Marketing Strategy

Using words in promotions plays a vital role in influencing consumer behavior. In this case, Esse applies marketing psychology, a strategy that utilizes consumer psychology to feel FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). This has succeeded in increasing consumer purchasing interest. One striking example is the tagline "LOVE YOURSELF," which creates a personal and deep sense of the product, thus encouraging consumers to buy immediately.

1. Copywriting (Text Writing)

The following table shows the results of the analysis of the effectiveness of copywriting in promoting Esse products:

Table 1. The Influence of Copywriting

Copywriting Aspect	Effectiveness (%)	Purchase Influence
Personal Language	85%	Very Influential
Use of Point of View	78%	Influential
Storytelling	73%	Influential

Source: Field Research (2023)

Based on the table above, personal language in copywriting is 85% effective in influencing consumer purchasing decisions. This strategy helps create an emotional closeness between the product and the consumer, directly increasing brand loyalty.

2. Tagline

Taglines such as "LOVE YOURSELF" on Esse products function as brand reminders and form an emotional connection between consumers and the product. This tagline influences consumer perception and differentiates Esse from competing products.

Influence of Public Figures (Brand Ambassadors)

The use of celebrities and public figures as brand ambassadors has a significant impact on Esse product sales. Celebrities who have a substantial influence on social media and the entertainment world can attract the attention of potential consumers. In this study, 67% of respondents stated that they are more likely to buy products promoted by celebrities or famous figures they follow.

Figure 1. The Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Product Sales



Source: Esse Sales Data (2023)

Figure 1 shows a 25% increase in sales after the Esse advertising campaign used celebrities as brand ambassadors.

Influence of Commercial Advertisements

Commercial television and social media advertisements are essential in attracting consumer attention. The analysis found that 72% of consumers learned about Esse products through television advertisements, while ads on social media influenced 60% of consumers.

Table 2. Influence of Advertising Media on Purchasing Decisions

Advertising Media	Percentage of Respondents (%)	Purchase Influence
Television	72%	Very Influential
Social Media	60%	Influential
Print Media	18%	Slightly Influential

Source: Respondent Questionnaire (2023)

Effective advertising helps companies convey clear information and persuade consumers to buy products. Messages conveyed through commercial advertisements often lead consumers to purchase products even though they are not in their primary needs. In addition, the positive impact of advertising also increases consumer trust in the brand, as reflected in the research results.

Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

USP is a unique point Esse products offer to differentiate them from competitors. Research shows that consumers choose Esse products because of their affordable prices and premium

product image, even though the price is slightly higher than other products. A good promotional strategy, the use of famous figures, and an emphasis on emotional and personal slogans support this.

Synthesis Analysis

Based on the results of this study, Esse's marketing strategy implemented in Medan has proven effective in increasing product sales, with a significant influence from copywriting, the use of taglines, and the role of brand ambassadors. The use of celebrities and advertisements in the mass media has been proven to influence consumer decisions to buy Esse products. This strategy aligns with modern marketing theories. As Kotler & Keller (2020) stated, psychological aspects in marketing significantly influence consumer decisions.

The data analysis highlights several key insights into how public figures, word choice, and commercial advertising influence consumer behavior, explicitly marketing Esse cigarettes in Indonesia. These findings are based on a thematic analysis of consumer and outlet responses and observations from in-depth interviews and field research.

1. Impact of public figures on brand perception the involvement of public figures in marketing campaigns has a notable impact on consumer trust and product appeal. According to field data, 82% of consumers reported increased confidence in the brand when associated with well-known celebrities, aligning with the source credibility theory. Additionally, 76% of retailers observed a significant increase in product inquiries and sales following campaigns that featured celebrities as brand ambassadors.
2. Effectiveness of persuasive language in advertising analysis of esse's promotional materials shows that persuasive language significantly shapes consumer attitudes. The table below illustrates the effectiveness of different aspects of copywriting:

Tabel 3. Copywriting effectiveness

Copywriting Aspect Effectiveness (%) Influence on Purchase Decision		
Personal Language	85%	Very Influential
Use of Point of View	78%	Influential
Storytelling	73%	Influential

3. These results demonstrate that personalized language in advertisements resonates strongly with consumers, encouraging a sense of identity with the brand and fostering positive purchasing decisions.
4. Influence of advertising format on consumer behavior television advertisements and social media platforms were observed to have varying impacts on consumer segments. While television remains a strong medium with high visual and emotional effects, social media platforms have shown an increasing influence, especially among younger demo figures.

The findings from this study confirm the influential role of public figures and strategic wording in shaping consumer perceptions, reinforcing existing literature while offering insights specific to the Indonesian market.

1. Public figures and brand credibility the effectiveness of public figures aligns with previous studies by pradhan et al. (2016) and dwivedi et al. (2018), who emphasize that celebrities provide social validation and foster emotional connections with consumers. In the context of the Indonesian market, celebrity endorsements enhance trust and establish esse as a relatable and appealing brand, as observed in consumer and outlet responses.
2. Persuasive language and emotional appeal targeted language aligns with persuasion theory (petty & cacioppo, 2017) and effectively communicates the brand's values and identity. For example, the "love yourself" tagline effectively leverages the fear of missing out (fomo) strategy, encouraging consumers to feel a deeper personal connection to the product. Similar findings by liu et al. (2020) support the idea that word choice in advertisements can strengthen brand-consumer relationships by resonating with consumer values.
3. Media influence and the role of television advertising television's impact on purchasing decisions is supported by the media richness theory (daft & lengel, 1986) and findings by zhao & zhang (2020), showing that traditional media remains effective for building brand image. However, social media's growing role underscores the need for brands to adapt multi-channel strategies that meet consumer preferences in diverse markets.
4. Triangulation and cross-validation of findings triangulating data from consumer and outlet perspectives adds validity to the results, as both groups highlighted the value of public figures and persuasive wording in increasing product appeal. For instance, retailers observed that products featured with celebrities saw better sales performance, reflecting consumer feedback about trust and connection influenced by endorsements.

These findings suggest that international brands in the cigarette industry should consider incorporating public figures and persuasive language to resonate with local market sentiments. Additionally, multi-platform advertising strategies will be essential in capturing the attention of diverse consumer demo figures in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, this study concludes that television advertising and brand ambassador selection significantly enhance product sales effectiveness, particularly for international brands like Esse in Medan City. A survey of active smokers revealed that advertisements and public figures influenced 70% of respondent's decisions to purchase Esse products. This underscores the critical role of selecting locally relevant brand ambassadors to strengthen global sales and implement effective international marketing strategies.

The study also highlights the psychological impact of brand communication strategies, such as taglines and copywriting. Esse's tagline "LOVE YOURSELF" employs the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon to create urgency, foster consumer loyalty, and reinforce purchasing decisions. This approach exemplifies how psychological triggers can shape consumer behavior and build stronger emotional connections to the brand. Additionally, the interaction between products and consumers evolves with the product's popularity and association with relatable public figures. Marketing strategies that embrace trends and adapt to changing consumer

behaviors, mainly through digital and social media platforms, have proven highly effective in fostering consumer engagement in the current era.

Theoretically, these findings validate key principles in consumer behavior and emotional marketing. They highlight the potency of psychological triggers like self-perception and identity in influencing purchasing decisions, particularly in a highly regulated industry like tobacco. Strategies such as leveraging public figures and employing personal language align with modern marketing communication theories, emphasizing storytelling and emotional engagement to enhance brand attachment.

Practically, this research provides actionable insights for businesses in regulated industries. It emphasizes crafting emotional and psychological connections through carefully chosen words and messaging. Companies should focus on building emotional resonance with consumers rather than solely on product functionality. Strategic use of public figures whose personal brands align with a company's values can bolster credibility and broaden appeal, mainly when localized for specific markets. Moreover, adopting a multi-channel approach, leveraging both traditional and digital media, is crucial to reach diverse audiences and foster interactive consumer relationships.

To maximize marketing impact, businesses should continue refining psychological marketing strategies, expand FOMO-driven campaigns across different channels, and select brand ambassadors who resonate with local audiences. Enhanced digital engagement, personalized communication, and tailored advertisements reflecting local cultural nuances will further solidify their relevance and connection with consumers.

REFERENCE

- Ainurrofiqin, M. (2021). The Role of Brand Ambassador in Digital Marketing. *Journal of Marketing Studies*, 12(2), 345-358.
- Ainurrofiqin, 2021, Pengaruh Brand Ambassador untuk Mempengaruhi Pembelian, Penerbit : the Publish
- Basu Swastha, DH, dan Irawan, 2017, Manajemen Pemasaran Modern, Penerbit Liberty, Yogyakarta.
- Carl McDaniel & Roger Gates, 2021, Riset Pemasaran Kontemporer, buku 1, Penerbit Salemba Empat, Jakarta.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Daft, R. L., & Lengel, R. H. (1986). Organizational information requirements, media richness, and structural design. *Management Science*, 32(5), 554-571.
- Dwivedi, A., McDonald, R., & Johnson, L. W. (2018). Celebrity endorsements, self-brand connection, and consumer-based brand equity. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 27(3), 267-282. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-10-2016-1333>

- Engel, J. F., Blackwell, R. D., & Miniard, P. W. (2018). *Consumer Behavior* (11th ed.). Dryden Press.
- Fatihudin, D., & Firmansyah, M. A. (2019). *Pemasaran jasa: Strategi, mengukur kepuasan, dan loyalitas pelanggan*. Penerbit Deepublish.
- Gumilang, R. R. (2019). *Implementasi digital marketing terhadap peningkatan penjualan hasil home industri*.
- Handoko, 2016, *Manajemen Pemasaran: Analisa Perilaku Konsumen*, cetakan kedua, Penerbit BPFE, Yogyakarta.
- Hovland, C. I., & Weiss, W. (2018). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 15(4), 635-650.
- Kang, J., Kim, S., & Lee, J. (2020). Celebrity endorsement and its influence on consumer buying behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 46(3), 438-450.
- Kim, H., & Park, S. (2021). The impact of television advertising on consumer buying decisions: A case study of the cigarette industry in South Korea. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 13(2), 49-60.
- Kim, H., & Park, J. (2019). Korean tobacco industry and its marketing strategy in the global market. *International Journal of Business Strategy*, 14(1), 23-35. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJBS-03-2018-0109>
- Kotler, P. (2019). *Marketing Management* (15th ed.). Pearson.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2020). *Marketing Management*. 15th Edition. Pearson.
- Kumar, V., & Singh, A. (2021). Adapting global marketing strategies for local markets: A case study of the tobacco industry in Southeast Asia. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 34(2), 125-144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08911762.2021.1879994>
- Lee, H. M., Choi, Y. S., & Kim, S. H. (2020). Market share competition in the tobacco industry: The case of KT&G. *Journal of International Business Research and Marketing*, 5(4), 22-30. <https://doi.org/10.18775/jibrm.1849-8558.2015.54.3003>
- Lavidge, R. J., & Steiner, G. A. (1961). A model for predictive measurements of advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing*, 25(6), 59-62.
- Liu, Z., Wang, Y., & Li, H. (2020). Language in advertising: How words influence consumer behavior. *Journal of Marketing Communication*, 26(4), 322-337.
- McCracken, G. (1989). Who is the celebrity endorser? Cultural foundations of the endorsement process. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16(3), 310-321.
- Nguyen, T., Ho, T., & Pham, V. (2022). The influence of celebrity endorsement on consumer purchasing behavior: Evidence from Southeast Asian countries. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 49(2), 203-219. <https://doi.org/10.1086/712546>
- Nugroho, Y., & Dewi, S. (2020). Peran duta merek dalam strategi pemasaran industri rokok di Indonesia. *Jurnal Ekonomi dan Bisnis*, 25(1), 87-98.

- Pradhan, D., Duraipandian, I., & Sethi, D. (2016). Celebrity endorsement: How celebrity–brand–user personality congruence affects brand attitude and purchase intention. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 22(5), 456-473. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2014.914561>
- Park, S., Lee, H., & Kim, J. (2019). The role of brand ambassadors in consumer-brand relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 83(2), 23-41.
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2017). *Communication and Persuasion: Central and Peripheral Routes to Attitude Change* (2nd ed.). Springer.
- Phan, M. T., & Riyadi, M. (2022). Pengaruh strategi komunikasi pemasaran terhadap loyalitas konsumen: Studi kasus industri tembakau di Indonesia. *Jurnal Manajemen Pemasaran*, 16(2), 145-162.
- Phan Riadi ,2022, Metode kuantitatif dan kualitatif , Penerbit PT. Eresco, Bandung.
- Rahman, S., Subramaniam, R., & Jamil, N. (2021). Digital vs. traditional advertising: A comparison in the tobacco industry. *Journal of Marketing Strategy*, 19(1), 72-88.
- Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Smith, J., Brown, L., & Lee, C. (2021). Celebrity influence in the marketing of tobacco products: A study of consumer perceptions. *Journal of Public Health Research*, 10(2), 203-210.
- Suwarno, T., & Gautama, W. (2022). Pengaruh public figure dan iklan komersial terhadap keputusan pembelian konsumen: Studi pada industri rokok internasional. *Jurnal Manajemen Pemasaran*, 17(3), 155-167.
- Suwarno, A., & Gautama, T. (2022). Strategi Marketing Berbasis Data Konsumen. *Journal of Business Research*, 8(3), 220-234.
- Suwarno & Gautama, 2022, cluster proportional random sampling Efforts, *Journal of Advertising Research*.
- Wang, Y., & Li, S. (2019). Advertising strategies in the tobacco industry: A critical review. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 159(3), 617-632.
- Yoon, K., & Kang, J. (2022). The impact of emotional advertising on consumer decision making: Evidence from the cigarette market. *Marketing Science Review*, 41(4), 341-355.
- Zhao, Q., & Zhang, X. (2020). Television advertising and consumer behavior: An analysis of cigarette commercials. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 37(2), 178-190.