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John B. Ford
Old Dominion University

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Editor's Desk

What Do We Know

About Celebrity Endorsement in Advertising?

JOHN B. FORD

Editor-in-Chief,

*Journal of Advertising
Research*

Eminent Scholar and

Professor of Marketing
and International
Business,

Strome College of

Business, Old Dominion
University

jbford@odu.edu



Celebrity endorsement in advertising is grounded in a common marketing assumption: Corporations have realized for some time that celebrity endorsers can enhance advertisement credibility and liking as well as brand image, awareness, and purchase behavior. Celebrities have built-in images and followers, both powerful influencers to potential consumers.

The right choice for an endorser can be an important decision for an advertiser. In **“Enhancing Brand Credibility via Celebrity Endorsement: Trustworthiness Trumps Attractiveness and Expertise”** (please see page 16), Stephen W. Wang (National Taiwan Ocean University) and Angeline Close Scheinbaum (University of Texas at Austin) analyzed the airline industry and examined source-credibility theory and its impact on brand performance for celebrity endorsements. Using 637 travelers, they assessed the role of trustworthiness, attractiveness, and endorser expertise on brand credibility and preference.

They found that much depends on the involvement of the consumer with the industry involved. They discovered that “trustworthiness trumps beauty attractiveness and credibility when it comes to celebrity-endorsement source characteristics in the airline industry—where trust is especially paramount.” They suggest that “advertisers using celebrity endorsement should feature an attractive celebrity who is perceived to be trustworthy to best influence both their low- and their high-involvement consumer base.” They also recommend that “in a global industry such as airlines, such a celebrity should be internationally recognized.”

Celebrities will have different levels of connection with those who follow them. This can affect the reaction of consumers to the endorsement relationship, and that, in turn, may depend on the profession of the celebrity. In **“The Dual Entertainment**

Theory in Celebrity Endorsements: The Role of Celebrity Worship and Profession,” (please see page 33), Subhadip Roy (Indian Institute of Management Udaipur) and Aditya Shankar Mishra (IBS Hyderabad) found that, in India and in the U.K., “Different motives are instrumental in the celebrity effect on the worshippers versus nonworshippers.”

Their research demonstrated that “celebrities from more glamorous professions, such as film actors, are perceived differently than celebrities from performance-oriented professions, such as sports.” They discovered “playful motives to be more relevant for celebrities from a glamorous profession, whereas aspirational motives became more relevant for celebrities related to a performance-related profession.”

Finally, the authors state that “the effect of celebrity endorsements on consumers might be generalizable to some extent, whereas the final outcome (*i.e.*, brand attitudes) might be dependent on the celebrity profession and brand novelty.”

Besides offering many benefits for the endorsed brand, celebrity endorsements also can have a negative impact. This was painfully apparent in the effects of personal scandals involving such famous spokespersons as Tiger Woods, Lance Armstrong, Martha Stewart, and O. J. Simpson. Offsetting negativity with more positive attitude on the part of sponsors may offer a means to improve brand image.

A team of Australian researchers studied the impact of a smile perceived to be genuine (a Duchenne smile) and a pre-existing negative attitude toward a celebrity in **“How a Smile Can Make a Difference—Enhancing the Persuasive Appeal of Celebrity Endorsers: Boosting Consumer Perceptions of Celebrity Genuineness Through the Use of a “Duchenne Smile” in Advertising”** (please see page 51). Jasmina Ilicic (Monash University) and two authors from The

University of Newcastle, Australia (Alicia Kulczynski and Stacey M. Baxter) studied 340 respondents and found that “altering the depiction of the celebrity in advertising can influence consumer perceptions of the celebrity’s genuineness.” They offer that consumers will “perceive a celebrity to be less genuine when they: 1) have a negative attitude toward the celebrity and 2) are exposed to a celebrity displaying a non-Duchenne (fake) smile.” On the other hand, “when a celebrity is featured in an advertisement displaying a Duchenne (genuine) smile, consumers will: 1) perceive the celebrity to be more genuine and 2) report more favorable attitudes toward the advertisement and greater purchase intention.”

The authors finally suggest “that even if things go astray and celebrities fall from grace, careful execution of advertising can counteract negative associations held with a celebrity, meaning that premature dumping and replacement of celebrity endorsers may be avoided.”

One way to assess the quality of celebrity endorsements is to examine the impact of the endorsement on stock-market returns. In “**The Market Value of Celebrity Endorsement: Evidence from India Reveals Factors that Can Influence Stock-Market Returns**” (please see page 65), Arpita Agnihotri (Pennsylvania State University Harrisburg) and Saurabh Bhattacharya (Newcastle University Business School, U.K.) examined market value of firms and endorsement announcements and found that abnormal stock returns were possible under certain types of circumstances in the Indian market. Their results demonstrate that “announcement specificity and celebrity reputation can increase the abnormal returns.” This is due to the fact that “more specific and detailed financial information is valued more highly by investors.”

One surprising finding: “Niche celebrities create more abnormal returns than mainstream celebrities.” These individuals are not as overexposed, they reflect an association with a niche environment, and they are less expensive. The authors finally suggest that “although managers invest heavily in celebrity endorsement and try to beat the competition by catching more of the customers’ attention, they need to realize that heavy investment in endorsements may lose value if a celebrity over endorses a brand.”

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The work you see in these pages reflects the knowledge and dedication of these reviewers, and I thank them for their hard work and insight. And, as the *JAR* continues to grow and evolve, as always, I welcome your feedback. **JAR**