

Attitudes towards attractive and credible celebrities in advertisements: a survey amongst students

ABSTRACT

The saying, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, is relevant in the use of attractive and credible celebrities in advertisements. A celebrity endorser is seen as a model who enjoys recognition from the public and who can be seen as an ubiquitous feature of marketing today. The use of celebrity endorsers is a fairly common practice in many organisations in supporting their corporate or brand image.

This article focuses on both the attractiveness and also the credibility of celebrities in advertisements. It is anticipated that attractive celebrities and credible celebrities could influence attitudes positively, and that this will eventually lead to the purchasing of the advertised products and services. O'Mahony and Meenaghan's (1997/1998) Perceptions of Celebrity Endorsements Scale was used to measure the overall attitudes of students on celebrity endorsements. Separate sets of items were developed to measure attractive and credible celebrities separately. The internal consistency reliability of these measurement scales reflected high scores ($\alpha > 0.70$) on all items.

In general, the respondents positively perceived celebrity endorsements. However, the overall rating of respondents in respect of an attractive celebrity in an advertisement was decidedly more unfavourable. Results also showed attitudes towards credible celebrity endorsements to be neither positive nor negative.

INTRODUCTION

Marketers, in their attempt to communicate the merits of their product or brand, have often chosen to use endorsement as a promotional strategy (Kamins, 1990:4). Celebrities have been endorsing products since the late nineteenth century. For marketers to maximise advertising effect, they have to understand the relationship between consumers' attitudes towards an advertisement, their attitudes towards the advertised brand, and how these attitudes influence their purchase intentions (Erdogan, 1999:292).

Celebrities seem to be effective endorsers, because of their symbolic aspirational reference group association (Lafferty, Goldsmith & Newell, 2002:1). Using celebrities in advertising campaigns has an obvious economic advantage, and has become common practice for companies (Erdogan, Baker & Tagg, 2001:39). Celebrity endorsers in advertisements have major advantages for marketers of brands and products, which include increased attention to assist in product marketing, giving new products instant personality and appeal (brand introduction), and brand repositioning (Erdogan, 1999:295). Company endorser decisions can generate considerable publicity even before advertisements are aired (Louie & Obermiller, 2002:41). The premise that celebrity effects play an important role in persuasive communications is why millions of dollars are spent annually on celebrity endorsement contracts (Tripp, Jensen & Carlson, 1994:535).

Since the 1970s research was conducted on various factors that can moderate the attitudes of consumers towards a celebrity in an advertisement. These include the attractiveness of the celebrity endorser (Baker & Churchill, 1977:538-555; Chaiken, 1979:1387-1396; Maddux & Rogers, 1980:235-244; Kahle & Homer, 1985:954-961; Ohanian, 1991:39-52; Solomon, Ashmore, & Longo, 1992:23-34; Till & Busler, 1998:576-586), the credibility of the celebrity endorser (Sterthal, Dholakia & Leavitt, 1978:252-260; Joseph, 1982:15-24; Kamins, Brand, Hoeke & Moe, 1989:4-10; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999:109-116; Lafferty, Goldsmith & Newell, 2002:1-12;), the perceived image of the celebrity endorser on consumers' intentions to purchase (Ohanian, 1991:46-54), the effects of multiple product endorsements by celebrities on consumers' attitudes and intentions (Tripp, Jensen & Carlson, 1994:535-547), the value of celebrity endorsers (Atkin & Block, 1983:57-61), endorser impact by product type (Friedman & Friedman, 1979:63-71) and the cultural foundations of the endorsement process (McCracken, 1989:310-321). Ohanian (1991:46) states that celebrity advertising is very popular for the reason that marketers' beliefs are that, for some consumers, messages delivered by well-known personalities, achieve a high degree of attention and recall.

1. ADVERTISING WITH CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS

The celebrity endorser can be seen as an ubiquitous feature of modern marketing today; he/she is an individual who enjoys recognition from the public, and who uses this public recognition on behalf of a consumer good, by making an appearance with the specific product in an advertisement (McCracken, 1989:310). Celebrities can include well-known individuals who can directly be associated with the specific product category being advertised, and they can be famous persons

who are publicly recognised for their achievements in areas unrelated to the product class being advertised (Freiden, 1984:33).

Celebrities are seen to have high profiles, and for this reason they may assist advertisements to “stand out” from the clutter, thus improving the advertisements’ communicative ability (Erdogan, Baker & Tagg, 2001:39). Celebrity endorsers can also be used to promote established brand images, as well as to promulgate new brand images, reposition brands, or introduce new ones (Friedman & Friedman, 1979:63). Marketers hope that when using a celebrity endorser in their advertisements, their target audience’s positive feelings towards a chosen celebrity will transfer to the endorsed brand or will otherwise enhance the brand’s standing (Till & Shimp, 1998:67).

There are several factors that moderate the attitudes of consumers towards a celebrity endorser in an advertisement. These include celebrity attractiveness, celebrity credibility, product-celebrity match, message and product type, level of involvement, number of endorsements by celebrities, target receiver characteristics, and overall meanings (Erdogan, 1999:308). Of the above variables, this article will emphasise only attractiveness and credibility

1.1 Attitudes of consumers towards attractive celebrities

A definition of **attractiveness** as a variable is difficult to define in that the assumption is made that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. It therefore follows that few can agree on what is beautiful (Joseph, 1982:16). Many marketers use the assumption that “what is beautiful is good”, and they often base their choice of celebrity on attractiveness, with the aim of gaining from the dual effects of celebrity status and physical appeal (Kamins, 1990:4). Endorsers are more effective when a “match” between the endorser and the endorsed product exists, and this can be referred to as a match-up hypothesis (Till & Busler, 1998:576). The main focus of the match-up hypothesis is on the attractiveness of the endorser, and the argument states that when celebrities are attractive, they are more effective endorsers of a product (Till & Busler, 1998:576). Empirical research has also found that, in respect of an attractiveness-related product, it was observed that the use of an attractive celebrity significantly enhanced measures of spokesperson credibility and attitude towards an advertisement, relative to the use of an unattractive celebrity (Kamins, 1990:4). Kahle and Homer (1985:955) moreover made the assumption that celebrities’ attractiveness gain them impact, and that their likeability is not relevant.

Research indicates that a celebrity endorser’s attractiveness will have no significance if there already exists a strong brand image or clearly observable benefits for the product that the celebrity advertises, but when the product does not possess obvious advantages, then an irrelevant cue such as a celebrity’s attractiveness may influence a consumer’s response to the product and the advertisement (Joseph, 1982:17).

Studies have shown that consumers evaluate advertisements, as well as the product being advertised, more favourably when attractive celebrity endorsers are used in the advertisement

(Joseph, 1982:22). Research findings suggest that celebrities in advertisements who are attractive individuals could potentially increase the effect of an advertisement, by either increasing the perceived credibility of the celebrity endorser, or by creating a “halo effect” which increases the acceptance and credibility of the communication message itself (Baker & Churchill, 1977:539).

Thus, the following hypothesis can be formulated based upon the above literature, and on the objective of this research study:

H1: Students have a favourable attitude towards an attractive celebrity in an advertisement.

1.2 Attitudes of consumers towards credible celebrities

Credibility can be described as the extent to which a source is perceived as an individual that possesses expertise relevant to the communication topic and who can be trusted to give an objective opinion of the subject (Lafferty, Goldsmith & Newell, 2000:43). Source credibility has been found to be an important antecedent to a consumer’s attitude towards an advertisement and towards the endorsed product (Lafferty et al., 2002:2). Endorser credibility is one of the most frequently employed methods in advertising as a tool to influence the attitudes and purchase intentions of consumers (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999:109).

Research indicates that in many situations, in an attempt to gain attention and recall, a highly credible source is more effective than a less credible source. It has also been found that highly credible endorsers produce a more positive attitude change towards the position advocated, and that they induce more behavioural changes than the less credible source (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999:109).

Belch and Belch (in Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999:110) argue that information gained from a credible source can, through the process of internalisation, influence the behaviour, opinions and attitudes of consumers. This process of internalisation occurs when the receiver of the message is motivated to assume an objectively correct position on an issue, because he/she learns and adopts the opinion of the credible spokesperson because he/she believes that this person represents an accurate position on the issue (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999:110). Thus, if a celebrity endorser is perceived to be an expert on a product that he/she advertises, then the likelihood exists that consumers will have a more favourable attitude towards both the advertisement and the brand being advertised, and that they will include it in their set of consideration the next time they purchase the same product (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999:110).

A 1986 study conducted by MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch indicates that the credibility of the celebrity endorser has a strong positive attitude towards the celebrity, which in turn has a strong positive relationship with the attitude of consumers towards the advertisement (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999:110). Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann (in Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999:114) found that for many individuals the effect of a celebrity endorser is not relevant when they evaluate the true merits of a product, and that the celebrity endorser serves only as a peripheral cue.

Fishbein and Ajzen (in Lafferty et al., 2002:3) indicate that source credibility has an effect on the probability that a message claim will be accepted. The consumer's perception of the credibility of a celebrity may also suffer because the celebrity may only promote a product for an external motive such as a monetary payment, and not because he/she has a true belief in the worth of the product (Kamins, Brand, Hoeke & Moe, 1989:6). This phenomenon especially occurs when the image or knowledge base of the celebrity is not consistent with that required by the product being advertised (Kamins et al., 1989:6).

Lafferty and Goldsmith (in Lafferty et al., 2000:45) showed that an attitude towards the advertisement is actually favourably related to the credibility of the endorser. They also indicated that the attitudes towards the advertisement mediate the relationship of the endorser's credibility relative to the attitude towards the product. Lafferty et al. (2000:47) expected to find that if attitude toward the advertisement were associated with the attitude towards the product, then this would be linked to purchase intent. Although product attitudes and purchase intent are indirectly influenced by endorser credibility, advertising attitudes are directly and positively influenced by the credibility of the endorser.

Thus, based on the above literature, and on the objective of this research study, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H₂: Students have a favourable attitude towards a credible celebrity in an advertisement.

2. RESEARCH PROBLEM AND AIM

Research conducted on advertisements using celebrity endorsements focused mainly on determining the success of such advertising. It is increasingly evident that the attractiveness and credibility of the celebrity endorser needs renewed attention, as these variables may also influence consumers' purchase intentions. There is relatively little evidence of research findings on the attractiveness and credibility of celebrities in South Africa. A gap exists in the existing literature on the use of attractive and credible celebrities in advertisements (See the following search engines on the World Wide Web: Emerald, EbscoHost, Sabinet and Science Direct [Accessed: 26 February 2007]). The research problem is: marketers and advertisers do not know if attractive and credible celebrities in advertisements influence attitudes positively towards the advertised products and services. The primary objective of this article is to investigate the attitudes of students towards an attractive and credible celebrity in advertisements.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sampling

This research study made use of a non-probability sampling method. It was not possible to collect data from the entire population, thus there was no accurate sampling frame available and statistical inferences could not be made from the sample. The students were selected on a non-random and

convenience basis according to participants who were available on campus on the day of the survey, and thus there was no list of elements from which the sample could have been drawn. Self-administered questionnaires were handed out to 220 students at the University of Pretoria during normal scheduled lectures. No incentives were given to respondents to complete the questionnaire. The final, realised sample included a total of 200 usable questionnaires, representing a 91% response rate.

The respondents provided a reasonably representative profile of all students at the University of Pretoria. The sample was somewhat dominated by female respondents (55%), the remaining 45% being males.

3.2 Measurement instrument

O'Mahony and Meenaghan's (1997/1998) Perceptions of Celebrity Endorsements Scale was used to measure the overall perceptions of students of celebrity endorsements. The items that were tested on a Likert-type scale ranged from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("Strongly agree"). An additional set of 16 statements was adopted and developed on a multiple-item five-point Likert-type scale to measure attitudes towards both attractive and credible celebrities in advertisements. This questionnaire was pretested using a convenience sample of six female students and four male students. Cosmetic alterations were made for the purposes of the data collection in August 2005.

A separate section on the attractive variable included the following definition: an attractive celebrity endorser can include a well-known individual who is seen to be appealing, beautiful, pretty or good looking and can directly be associated with the specific product category being advertised. He/she can be a famous person who is publicly recognised for his/her achievements in areas unrelated to the product being advertised.

Before continuing with the section on credibility, the following definition was provided: a credible celebrity endorser can be described as an individual who possesses expertise relevant to the communication topic and who can be trusted to give an objective opinion of the subject. He/she can be a famous person who is publicly recognised for his/her achievements in areas unrelated to the product or brand being advertised.

These definitions were printed on the questionnaires for all the respondents to have the same description and attached the same meaning to attractive and credible celebrities.

For the internal consistency of the questionnaire, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was determined on the variables, as reflected in Table 1. All scores are well above the acceptable value of 0.70. This indicates that the measurement scales all have a high degree of internal consistency reliability.

Table 1: Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients

Variable	Cronbach alpha
Total - perceptions of celebrity endorsements	0.80
Total - celebrity attractiveness: advertisement	0.80
Total - celebrity attractiveness: product	0.90
Total - celebrity credibility: advertisement	0.78
Total - celebrity credibility: product	0.92

As Table 1 indicates, high scores were achieved: Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the measuring of attitudes towards celebrity endorsements is 0.80 (based on the items of O'Mahony and Meenaghan's studies of 1997/1998), celebrity attractiveness with focus on the advertisement ($\alpha = 0.80$), celebrity attractiveness with focus on the product ($\alpha = 0.90$), celebrity credibility with focus on the advertisement ($\alpha = 0.78$), and celebrity credibility with focus on the product ($\alpha = 0.92$).

4. HYPOTHESES TESTS

Both hypotheses were tested at a 5% level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Hypothesis 1

H₀ (null): Students have an unfavourable attitude towards an attractive celebrity in an advertisement.

H₁ (alt): Students have a favourable attitude towards an attractive celebrity in an advertisement.

The descriptive statistics in Table 2 indicate that students have a favourable attitude towards an advertisement containing an attractive celebrity ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.95$), and an unfavourable attitude towards the product endorsed by an attractive celebrity ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 0.97$).

Table 2: The attractiveness of a celebrity in an advertisement

Celebrity attractiveness and the focus on the advertisement		
Variable	M	SD
An attractive celebrity in an advertisement attracts my attention to the product being advertised.	3.89	0.87
I give more attention to an attractive celebrity in an advertisement than the product itself.	3.66	1.01
An advertisement with an attractive celebrity grabs my attention.	3.95	0.79
I am interested in an advertisement, which uses an attractive celebrity.	3.36	0.94
I am more interested in an advertisement when an attractive celebrity is used to endorse the product.	3.23	1.04
An attractive celebrity in an advertisement interests me more than the product itself.	3.13	1.05
Average	3.54	0.95
Celebrity attractiveness and the focus on the product		
Variable	M	SD
I often want to know more about products that are endorsed by an attractive celebrity.	2.91	0.97
I have a desire towards the product when an attractive celebrity is used in an advertisement.	2.86	0.93
Products are more desirable to me when an attractive celebrity is used in an advertisement.	2.90	1.01
I prefer buying products that are endorsed by an attractive celebrity.	2.68	0.97
To make sure I buy the right products, I often observe what attractive celebrities are endorsing.	2.38	1.03
When buying products, I generally purchase those products I think an attractive celebrity will approve of.	2.10	0.99
I often identify with an attractive celebrity by purchasing the products they endorse in an advertisement.	2.30	1.00
I often make my purchase decisions based on the attractiveness of a celebrity in an advertisement.	2.03	0.86
Average	2.52	0.97

Scale values range from 1 (“Strongly disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly agree”).

M = mean, SD = standard deviation

Since the attitudes of students towards an attractive celebrity in an advertisement was measured at an interval level of measurement, and as this hypothesis involves a statement about a specific population characteristic, the appropriate parametric significance test is the one-sample t-test. If its assumptions cannot be satisfied, the one sample sign test can be used as a non-parametric alternative.

The assumption of normality was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests for normality, as well as by means of a visual inspection of histograms and normal probability plots. These tests indicate slight departures from normality in both sub samples.

Since the one sample-t-test is robust for mild departures from normality with large samples (Pallant, 2001:172), it was conducted to evaluate whether the mean score of the students deviated significantly from 3, the scale midpoint. The sample mean of 3.53 ($SD = 0.68$) for the attitudes of students towards an advertisement when an attractive celebrity is used deviated significantly from 3, $t(199) = 11.18$, $p < 0.01$, and the sample mean of 2.52 ($SD = 0.74$) for the attitudes of students towards the product endorsed by an attractive celebrity deviated significantly from 3, $t(199) = -9.20$, $p < 0.01$.

Table 3: Results of the one-sample-t-test for the attitudes of students towards an attractive celebrity in an advertisement

Test value = 3						
	t	df	p-value	Mean difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
Total – celebrity attractiveness: advertisement	11.18	199	0.00	0.53	0.44	0.63
Total – celebrity attractiveness: product	-9.20	199	0.00	-0.48	-0.58	-0.38

As indicated in Table 3, the results of the one-sample-t-test indicate that students have a favourable attitude towards an advertisement when an attractive celebrity is used. It can also be said that the results of the one-sample-t-test indicate that students have an unfavourable attitude towards the product endorsed by an attractive celebrity. The overall rating of students towards an attractive celebrity in an advertisement was an unfavourable one, eliciting a mean of 2.96 (where 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), and therefore H_0 can be accepted and H_1 must be rejected. Therefore, students do not have a favourable attitude towards an attractive celebrity in advertisements.

Hypothesis 2

H₀ (null): Students have an unfavourable attitude towards a credible celebrity in an advertisement.

H₁ (alt): Students have a favourable attitude towards a credible celebrity in an advertisement.

The descriptive statistics in Table 4 indicate that students have a favourable attitude towards an advertisement containing a credible celebrity ($M = 3.33, SD = 0.93$), and an unfavourable attitude towards the product endorsed by a credible celebrity ($M = 2.75, SD = 1.03$).

Table 4: The credibility of a celebrity in an advertisement

Celebrity credibility and the focus on the advertisement		
Variable	M	SD
A credible celebrity in an advertisement attracts my attention to the product being advertised.	3.65	0.88
I give more attention to a credible celebrity in an advertisement than the product itself.	3.08	0.96
An advertisement with a credible celebrity grabs my attention.	3.72	0.82
I am interested in an advertisement, which uses a credible celebrity.	3.53	0.90
I am more interested in an advertisement when a credible celebrity is used to endorse the product.	3.32	1.03
A credible celebrity in an advertisement interests me more than the product itself.	2.70	0.99
Average	3.33	0.93
Celebrity credibility and the focus on the product		
Variable	M	SD
I often want to know more about products that are endorsed by a credible celebrity.	3.12	1.02
I have a desire towards the product when a credible celebrity is used in an advertisement.	2.84	0.97
Products are more desirable to me when a credible celebrity is used in an advertisement.	2.89	1.02
I prefer buying products that are endorsed by a credible celebrity.	2.92	1.02
To make sure I buy the right products, I often observe what credible celebrities are endorsing.	2.70	1.06
When buying products, I generally purchase those products I think a credible celebrity will approve of.	2.41	1.03
I often identify with a credible celebrity by purchasing the products they endorse in an advertisement.	2.52	1.06
I often make my purchase decisions based on the credibility of a celebrity in an advertisement.	2.59	1.06
Average	2.75	1.03

Scale values range from 1 (“Strongly disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly agree”).

M = mean, SD = standard deviation

Since the attitudes of students towards a credible celebrity in an advertisement were measured at an interval level of measurement, and as this hypothesis involves a statement about a specific population characteristic, the appropriate parametric significance test is the one-sample t-test. If its assumptions cannot be satisfied, the one sample sign test can be used as a non-parametric alternative. The assumption of normality was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests for normality, as well as by means of visual inspection of histograms and normal probability plots. These tests indicate slight departures from normality in both sub samples.

Since the one sample-t-test is robust for mild departures from normality with large samples (Pallant, 2001:172), it was conducted to evaluate whether the mean score of the students deviated significantly from 3, the scale midpoint. The sample mean of 3.53 (SD = 0.68) for the attitudes of students towards an advertisement when a credible celebrity is used deviated significantly from 3, $t(199) = 11.18, p < 0.01$, and the sample mean of 2.52 (SD = 0.74) for the attitudes of students towards the product endorsed by a credible celebrity deviated significantly from 3, $t(199) = -9.20, p < 0.01$.

Table 5: Results of the one-sample-t-test for the attitudes of students towards a credible celebrity in an advertisement

Test value = 3						
	t	df	p-value	Mean difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
Total – celebrity credibility: advertisement	7.34	199	0.00	0.33	0.24	0.42
Total – celebrity credibility: product	-4.29	199	0.00	-2.51	-0.37	-0.14

As indicated in Table 5, the results of the one-sample-t-test indicate that students have a favourable attitude towards an advertisement when a credible celebrity is used. It can also be said that the results of the one-sample-t-test indicate that students have an unfavourable attitude towards a product endorsed by a credible celebrity. The overall rating of students towards a credible celebrity in an advertisement was neither favourable nor unfavourable in that it elicited a mean of 3.00 (where 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), and H_0 cannot therefore be rejected. Students have a neutral attitude towards a credible celebrity.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was aimed at exploring the attitudes of students towards an attractive and credible celebrity in an advertisement. This research contributes to marketing and communication literature by demonstrating the importance of celebrity endorsements in the context of advertising. Consistent with research advocating the importance of attractive and credible celebrities in advertising (O'Mahony & Meenaghan, 1997/1998), this study's findings indicate that students have a favourable perception of celebrity endorsements, and that they especially have the perception that celebrity endorsements create a positive impression and that they are likeable. The overall rating of students' attitudes towards an attractive celebrity in an advertisement is unfavourable, while the attitudes of students towards a credible celebrity in an advertisement is neither favourable nor unfavourable.

In contrast to the above results, previous studies have shown that an attractive and credible celebrity could serve as an important antecedent in evaluations of advertisements and products, and the credible endorser has specifically been shown to have a positive effect on consumers' attitudes-towards-the-ad, as well as on the attitude-towards-the-product (Goldsmith et al., 2000). The assumption that attractive and credible celebrities could lead to positive attitude changes towards the advertised product or service cannot be confirmed. As Ohanian (1991) states, the use of an attractive or credible celebrity can create initial interest and attention for an advertisement, but such as an endorsement will not necessarily result in an attitude change towards the endorsed product.

The fact that an attractive and credible celebrity in an advertisement was not found to be significant in the sample of students might be attributed to the match-up hypothesis formulated by Till and Busler (1998), where celebrity endorsers are more effective when a "match" between the endorser and the endorsed product exists. The unfavourable attitude of students towards the product endorsed by an attractive or credible celebrity is therefore an indication that students are of the opinion that when a celebrity is attractive or credible, he/she is not necessarily a more effective endorser of a product. The absence of students' favourable attitudes towards an attractive celebrity in an advertisement can partially be ascribed to the fact that (in advertisements), most celebrities are attractive, and as such, respondents have a mindset in which attractiveness is not a determining factor in their product-selection decisions. Students may be of the opinion that when a person is famous, they disregard what the person looks like - as everyone knows the face - and therefore it is hard for them to judge whether the person is pretty or ugly.

Students' unfavourable attitudes towards the product endorsed by an attractive or credible celebrity may be attributed to the fact that celebrities and products both represent nodes, and these nodes are initially unconnected. This does not mean that the feelings towards a celebrity and meanings attached to the celebrity are expected to transfer to the endorsed product. Thinking of a celebrity may not be as likely to activate an associated product node as thinking of a product would be to activate an associated celebrity node. Another reason for this can also be that, though advertisers expect the associative link between the product and the celebrity to transfer favourable feelings about the celebrity to the endorsed brand, a lowered evaluation of the celebrity can potentially lower the product evaluations.

5.1 Managerial implications

This study indicates that the attractiveness and credibility of a celebrity in an advertisement plays an important role in student evaluations of the advertisement, but that it does not seem to have a direct effect on students' attitudes in respect of the endorsed product. It is premature to dismiss the possibility of celebrity attractiveness and credibility in advertisements ever achieving useful match-up dimensions, but it does seem that empirically demonstrating this effect awaits further research. It is important that celebrity/product pairings are wisely considered, and this research reinforces the importance of careful selection of endorsers for products in order to maximise the value of the endorsement. Although attractive celebrity endorsers can, in general, be effective, credibility is likely to be a more appropriate criterion for matching an advertisement and a product with endorsers. Marketers are likely to see improved favourable attitudes towards attractive and credible celebrity endorsers when there is a match between the endorsed product and the celebrity endorser.

5.2 Limitations

The present study has some limitations, and the recognition of these should help refine future research efforts. First, the findings are limited to the students at the University of Pretoria. Future research with the students of other universities could shed light on the limits of the present findings. Secondly, a specific sample in the form of students was used, so any generalisations to other populations should be made with caution. Thirdly, confidence in the results is also limited by the fact that there were more female than male respondents. Although the sample size was deemed acceptable, a larger sample would have allowed the study to run a more powerful analysis. Lastly, the study only made use of one single questionnaire to measure all constructs included, so perhaps the strength of the relationships between these constructs may be somewhat inflated.

5.3 Recommendations for further research

This research study could be duplicated in other countries to provide a basis for cross-cultural comparisons. The reason for these possible replications is that every country has its own culture(s), which may very well affect the attitudes towards attractive and credible celebrities in advertisements. The laboratory nature of previous studies and the preponderance of student subjects suggest that future research on celebrity attractiveness and credibility must include more field investigations, and must employ subjects from non-student populations. An avenue of research that requires attention includes research that should concentrate on more precisely determining how advertising accomplishes the transfer of meaning from the celebrity to the endorsed product, and how consumers interpret and use the meanings that come to them as a result of endorsement. Future research should explore the different factors able to moderate the attitudes of consumers towards a celebrity in an advertisement. It can be said that these recognised shortcomings could inspire researchers to define their future research agendas.

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