



ENDORSER CREDIBILITY EFFECTS ON CONSUMER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS ADVERTISEMENT AND BRAND: WHEN BRAND FAMILIARITY IS MODERATOR (A CONCEPTUAL STUDY)

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Abstract

Due to the importance of advertising, companies allocate huge budgets to it. The use of celebrity as spokespeople for companies continues to be a popular method of advertising. The reason behind the popularity of celebrity advertising is the advertiser's belief that messages delivered by well-known personalities achieve a high degree of attention and recall for some consumer. The present study assesses the impact of endorser credibility on attitude towards advertisement (Aad), and attitude towards the-brand (Ab). In addition, the study is a conceptual study uses endorser credibility as independent variable of study, attitude towards brand as dependent variable of study, attitude towards advertising is the mediating variable and the prior attitude towards brand as moderator on the relationship between attitude towards advertisement (Aad) and attitude towards brand (Ab).

Keywords: Endorser Credibility, Attitude towards Advertisement, Attitude towards Brand, and Prior Attitude toward Brand

INTRODUCTION

Professional communicators know how difficult it is to get a message over to an audience. Speeches are often received with skepticism. Business particularly focuses an incredulous reception. Corporate speechmaking is an indispensable tool that must be used to maintain or gain credibility in an incredulous age. Speech offers a number of features: 1. it humanizes the message. 2. It is readily adaptable to the needs and interests of the audience. 3. It permits interaction. 4. It allows a person to probe an issue in considerable depth. Speech is a credible medium (Tarver et al., 1981).

Because of the importance of communicator's role, companies try to present themselves, their products, and services with good communicators whom are able to trigger consumer's perception and change their attitude toward companies and their products and services.

The rationale of paying millions of dollars to these actors and athletes, of course, is that these message sources will add credibility to the advertisement. This added credibility due to the celebrity endorsement is expected in turn to enhance consumers' attitude toward ad (Aad), (Yoon et al., 1998).

Rusciolelli (1998), mentioned few questions as scales, if companies' want to choose the right spokesperson, these directions questions as follows:

Does the speaker have credibility and cachet?

Does the speaker have any correlation to your company's event?

Does the speaker have the skills to deliver a compelling keynote address?

Is the speaker over-saturated in the market?

Will your audience relate to the speaker?

Is the speaker too self-serving?

Will the speaker overshadow your event?

Will the speaker refer to your company in the speech?

Are speakers chosen based on your company president's personal preferences?

Many advertisements feature well-known athletes, actors, and other famous people to influence consumer perceptions and purchase intentions of the advertised brands. Communications scholars and advertisers practitioners seem to share the belief that the perceived attributes or characters of product endorsers influence the persuasive effects of the ads. As much, the use of celebrities as spokespeople for brands is a popular method of advertising (Ohanian, 1991).

However, many researchers have demonstrated that (Aad) influences consumers' attitudes towards the advertised brand (e.g., Gardner, 1985; Homer, 1990; Goldsmith et al.,

2000; 2002; 2004; Lutz, & Belch, 1986; Miniard, Bhatla, & Rose, 1990; Mitchell & Olson, 1981). They have found robust evidence that brand attitude (Ab) influences purchase intention (PI). A particularly noteworthy model in this stream of research is what is commonly known as the dual mediation hypotheses (DMH), originally proposed by Letz (1985) and later modified by Miniard et al. (1990) and Yoon et al., (1998). The basic premise of the DMH is that consumers' PIs are influenced by both (Ab) and (Aad) (either directly or indirectly through Aad's influence on Ab). This study will focus on the effects of dimensions of source credibility on (Aad), (Ab), and (PI).

The commonly reported influence of source credibility on the dependent variables may be different in different cultures. For example, a message source perceived as an expert might be more persuasive than someone perceived as trustworthy in certain cultures. Similarly, a trustworthy source might be more effective in other cultures in eliciting, or positive reactions to the advertisement and the advertised brand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Anderson (1970), source credibility can be conceptualized as a "weight" that can enhance the value of information in a message. There is ample research evidence to support a main effect of source credibility such that a highly credible communication source is more effective than a less credible source in causing positive attitude change and behavioral intentions (Gotlieb & Sarel, 1991; Homer & Kahle, 1990; Ward & MaGinnies, 1974; Woodside & Davenport, 1974). The effectiveness of a highly credible source, however, has been found to be moderated by some contextual factors. For example, Yoon et al., (1998), cited from McCroskey, 1969; 1970; Miller, 1966; Ward & MaGinnies, 1974) they mentioned that, the main effect of source increases when a highly credible source is identified early in the message and use of evidence can increase the influence of a low-credibility source. In addition, the effectiveness of source credibility has been found to be moderated by some receiver characteristics including the locus of control, authoritarianism, involvement, and extremity of initial attitude. For instance, Yoon et al., cited from (Bettinghaus, Miller, & Steinfatt, 1970; Haley, 1972) they mentioned that, highly authoritarian people tend to be more influenced by high-credibility source. Johnson and Scileppi (1969) suggested that individuals highly involved with the issue are relatively immune to the effect of source credibility. In other words, people with low involvement may simply accept or reject the message on the basis of source without carefully examining the arguments. Yoon et al (1998) cited from (Dholakia & Sternthal, 1977) that, they found that people with initial positive attitude towards the advocated position were more influenced by a less credible source and people with initial negative attitudes toward the advocated issue were more persuaded by a more credible source.

In addition to studying the role source credibility in the persuasion process, a considerable amount of attention has been paid to what constitutes source credibility. Yoon et al., (1998) tried to flow the dimensions of source credibility over time, they mentioned, These studies have identified expertness and trustworthiness (Hovland & Weiss, 1951); safety, qualification, and dynamism (Berlo, Lemert, & Mertz, 1969); trustworthiness and competence (Bowers & Phillips, 1967); and authoritativeness and character (McCroskey, 1966) as possible dimensions of source credibility. Although various dimensions have been proposed, most of the studies suggest that expertise and trustworthiness are two of the most important and enduring components of source credibility. In the advertising context, attractiveness has also been suggested as a component of source credibility (McCracken, 1989; Ohanian, 1990).

However, Ohanian (1990), in next table (1) summarized the dimensions of source credibility and components of measure for source credibility which were used in previous studies.

Table 1: Summary of Major Research Studies that have addressed the components of Source Credibility

Authors	Dimensions measured	Number of items
Applbaum and Anatol, (1972)	• Trustworthiness	13
	• Expertness	10
	• Dynamism	5
	• Objectivity	3
Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz (1969)	• Safety	5
	• Qualification	5
	• Dynamism	5
Bowers and Phillips(1967)	• Trustworthiness	7
	• Competence	5
DeSarbo and Harshman (1985)	• Expertness	4
	• Attractiveness Trustworthiness	2
	• Likability	1
	Additional Dimensions Evaluated	2
McCroskey (1966)	• Potency	
	• Activity	
	• Authoritativeness	6
	• Character	6
Simpson and Kahler(1980-81)	• Authoritativeness	23
	• Character	20
	• Believability	8
	• Dynamism	6
Whitehead (1968)	• Expertness	7
	• Sociability	3
	• Trustworthiness	18
	• Competence	4
Whitehead (1968)	• Dynamism	3
	• Objectivity	3

Wynn (1987)	• Expertness	12
	• Dynamism	6
	• Believability	3
	• Sociability	3

Table 1...

According to dimensions of endorser credibility, (Ohanian, 1990; 1991; Goldsmith et al., 2000; 2001; 2002) have sourced that endorser credibility has three dimensions, expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness.

Anyway, many studies considered endorser credibility (En/C) as antecedent of attitude towards advertisement (Aad), and (Aad) as the main input of attitude towards brand (Ab), (e.g., Goldsmith et al., 1999; 2000; 2001; 2002). Prior attitude towards brand (PAB) plays as a function and representative of brand familiarity which plays as moderating variable in the relationship between (Aad) and (Ab) and the following sections will discuss these variables:

Endorser Credibility's Relationship with Attitude toward Advertisement and Brand Attitude

If a consumer has a positive perception about an endorser that appears in an advertisement, this will lead him or her to form a positive (Aad).

Previous studies confirm that a credible endorser can serve as an important antecedent in the evaluations of advertisements and brands. Specifically, a credible endorser has shown to have a positive effect on the consumers' (Aad), and (Ab), (Goldsmith et al., 1999; 2000; 2002; Goldberg et al., 1990; Mitchell et al., 1981; Mackenzie, Lutz & Belch, 1986). Thus, (En/C) has a direct relationship with (Aad).

On the other hand, (En/C) has an indirect relationship with (Ab) through (Aad), when a consumer is interested with an advertisement, he or she will form a positive attitude towards the advertised brand that is available in the advertisement.

Previous studies show that there is an indirect relationship between (En/C) and (Ab), (Goldsmith et al., 1999). This is consistent with the literature on (Aad) according to the Elaboration Likelihood Model ELM. Endorser credibility is linked with the peripheral route to attitude to advertising (Aad), also, (En/C) is linked with central route to attitude toward brand (Ab).

This study attempts to investigate the relationships of (En/C-Aad), (En/C-Ab) and (Aad-Ab) when prior attitude towards brand (PAB) is tested, following previous studies done in the topic (i.e., Goldsmith et al., 2000; 2002; Ohanian, 1991; Shimp & Gresham, 1985).

Attitude towards Advertisement and Attitude toward Brand

Attitude is an individual's internal evaluation of an object such as a branded product, and has been an important concept in marketing research since 1960s. There are two major reasons for this long-term interest. First, attitudes are often considered relatively stable and enduring predisposition to behave in particular way (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Consequently, they should be useful predictors of consumers' behavior towards a product or service. Second, social psychology has provided several theoretical models of the attitude construct; especially through studies by Fishbein and Ajzen (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) that have stimulated much of attitudinal research in marketing.

Attitude also has been defined as “relatively global and enduring evaluation of an object, issue, person, or action” (Hoyer & MacInnis, 1997). Oskamp (1991) cited from Wu (1999) stated that there are many academic writers and researchers who have written on attitude dimensions. Most of them indicated that attitude is considered as a good predictor to understanding consumers' intentions and behaviors.

Previous studies have referred attitude towards specific dimensions such as attitude towards advertiser (Lutz, 1985), attitude towards advertisement and attitude towards brand (Sallam et al., 2011; 2012. 2017. 2022. 2023). The present study is focusing on two of them, which are, (Aad) and (Ab).

Attitude towards advertisement (Aad) has been defined as a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure situation (Mackenzie, Lutz & Belch, 1986; Biehal, Stephens & Curlo, 1992). (Ab) is defined as a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular brand after the advertising stimulus has been shown to the individual (Phelps & Hoy, 1996). Previous studies indicated that (Aad) and (Ab) are not considered as one variable as they are different from each other, and had been used as separated variables (e.g., Goldsmith et al., 2000; 2002). The different between the both (Aad) and (Ab) is very clear as appeared from their definitions above.

It is understood that messages in advertisements affect the relationship between (Aad) and (Ab), specifically when consumers are unfamiliar with the advertised brand due to their lack of prior knowledge on which to base their (Ab). Thus, they are more likely to rely on (Aad) in forming an (Ab). Consumers with prior brand familiarity, by contrast, are more likely to draw on their existing brand knowledge, attenuating the influence of attitude towards specific advertisement (Aad) on (Ab). Therefore, the effect of (Aad) on brand evaluations should be greater when the advertisement is for an unfamiliar rather than a familiar brand (Machleit & Wilson, 1988; Machleit & Madden, 1993; Campbell & Keller, 2003). Hence, there is a general

agreement shows that (Aad) affects (Ab) when unfamiliar brands are tested. But when brand familiarity is tested, the relationship between (Aad) and (Ab) is different and next section will explore the relationship.

Brand Familiarity

Brand familiarity is defined as individual's familiarity with a brand on which if a person is familiar with the brand, then the familiarity will reduce the need for external information. Whereas the unfamiliarity with the brand will increase such need (Oliver & Bearden 1985).

Prior attitude towards brand (PAB) is considered as a function of brand familiarity, so, it plays an important role in changing the relationship between (Aad) and (Ab) and making it significant or insignificant. Previous studies used (PAB) as a moderator between (Aad) and (Ab) (e.g., Machleit and Wilson 1988; Phelps & Hoy, 1996). Thus, (PAB) refers to an individual's response to the brand before being exposed to the advertising stimulus (Phelps & Hoy, 1996).

If a consumer has a positive (Aad), he/she would directly or indirectly form a positive (Ab) that is available in the advertisement. Previous studies also confirm that (Aad) has a strong relationship with (Ab) and this is consistent with DMH, which stresses direct and indirect relationships between (Aad) and (Ab) (Shimp & Gresham, 1985; Mackenzie & Belch, 1986; Brown & Stayman, 1992).

The primary focus of the earlier literature has been on assessing the effects of (Aad) on (Ab) and evidence from previous studies strongly supports a positive relationship between the constructs (Machleit & Wilson, 1988). Furthermore, previous studies have primarily focused on attitude towards advertising of unfamiliar or hypothetical brands. This was particularly true, in the early 1980s, where there have been many studies that had demonstrated an association between attitude towards advertising and attitude towards brand by using unfamiliar or hypothetical brands. However, by the end of the 1980s, subsequent studies had included both familiar and unfamiliar brands to provide more insight into the differences in response that are elicited by familiar and unfamiliar brands (Machleit & Wilson 1988; Machleit, Madden & Allen, 1990).

Attitude towards Advertisement (Aad) and Attitude towards Brand (Ab) when Brand Familiarity is tested

(Aad) and (Ab) may be expected to be more divergent in the case of familiar versus unfamiliar brands (Campbell & Keller, 2003). It is understood that messages of advertisement

affect the relationship between (Aad) and (Ab), especially when consumers are unfamiliar with a brand. This could be due to their lack of prior knowledge about the brand on which to base their attitude on towards the brand. Therefore, we could conclude that, firstly, customers are more likely to rely on attitude towards advertisement before forming their attitude towards the brand.

Consumers with prior brand familiarity, by contrast, are more likely to draw on their existing brand knowledge, attenuating the influence of attitude towards the specific advertisement on attitude towards the brand. Therefore, the effect of (Aad) on (Ab) should be greater when the advertisement is for an unfamiliar rather than a familiar brand (Machleit & Madden 1993; Machleit & Wilson, 1988; Campbell & Keller, 2003). Hence, there is a general agreement that (Aad) affects (Ab) when unfamiliar brands are tested (Batra & Ray, 1985; Phelps & Hoy, 1996). Table 2 summarizes the relationship between (Aad) and (Ab) when unfamiliar brand is tested as follows:

Table 2: Relationship between Attitudes towards Advertising (Aad) - Attitude towards Brand (Ab)

When Unfamiliar Brand Is Tested

No.	Study	Aad-Ab Relationship	Result
1	Campbell & Keller (2003)	Direct relationship	Significant
2	Homer (1990)	Indirect, through brand cognition.	Significant
6	Machleit & Sahni (1992)	Direct relationship	Significant
12	Homer & Yoon (1992)	Direct relationship	Significant
17	Biehal & Stephens & Curlo (1992)	Direct relationship	Significant

On the other hand, there is a disagreement as to whether (Aad) influences (Ab) for familiar brands or when they use brand familiarity as a moderator between (Aad) and (Ab) (Gresham & Shimp, 1985; Phelps & Hoy, 1996). Thus, prior attitude towards brand (PAB) is assumed to be playing an important role in changing the relationship between (Aad) and (Ab) and makes it a significant or insignificant relationship. Phelps and Thorson (1991), and Edell and Burke (1986), found a significant (Aad-Ab) relationship for familiar brands. On the contrary, Machleit and Wilson (1988), and Madden and Allen (1990) did not find any significant Aad-Ab relationship for familiar brands. In addition, Phelps and Hoy (1996), and Laroche, Kim and Zhou (1996), found that (Aad) has significant effect on (Ab) for both familiar and unfamiliar brands. Moreover, Phelps and Thorson (1991) found a significant (Aad) on (Ab) relationship for familiar brand. In addition, Gresham and Shimp (1985), found significant effects of (Aad) on (Ab) for only six of fifteen familiar brands. Machleit and Wilson (1988), and Madden and Allen (1990), however, did not find any significant effect of (Aad) on (Ab) when brand familiarity is tested.

Table 3: Relationship between Attitudes towards Advertising (Aad) –
Attitude towards Brand (Ab) When Familiar Brand Is Tested

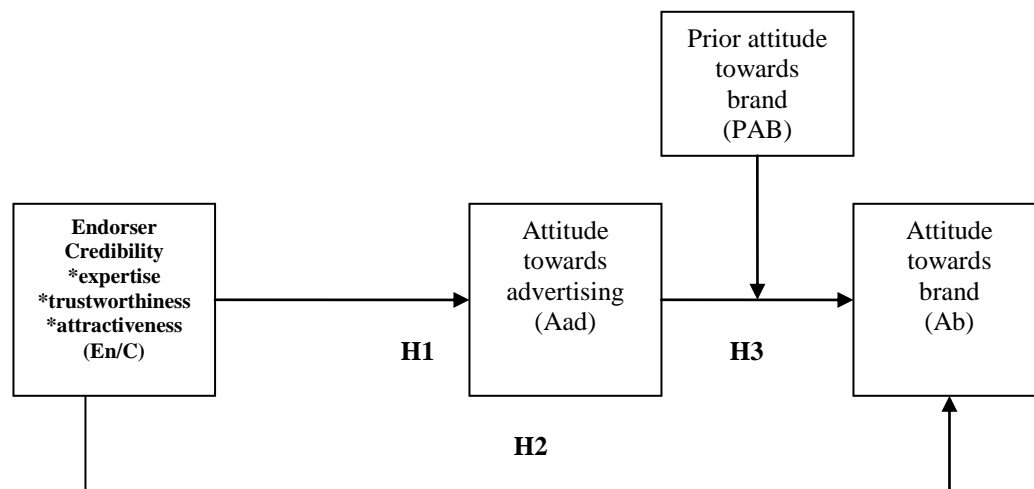
No.	Study	Aad – Ab Relationship (when Brand Familiarity is tested)	Results
1	Gresham & Shimp (1985)	Found significant effects of (Aad) on (Ab) for only six of 15 familiar brands.	Significant and Insignificant
2	Edell & Burke (1986)	Found no role of (PAB) as moderator in the relationship between (Aad-Ab).	Insignificant
3	Machleit & Wilson (1988)	Did not find significant relationship between (Aad) and (Ab) for familiar brands.	Insignificant
4	Madden & Allen (1990)	Did not find significant (Aad-Ab) relationship for familiar brands.	Insignificant
5	Phelps & Thorson (1991)	Found a significant (Aad-Ab) relationship for familiar brands.	Significant
6	Laroche, Kim & Zhou (1996)	Found that (Aad) has significant effect on (Ab) for both familiar and unfamiliar brands.	Significant
7	Phelps & Hoy (1996)	Found that (Aad) has significant effect on (Ab) for both familiar and unfamiliar brands.	Significant

To sum up, there is a general agreement that (Aad) affects (Ab) when unfamiliar brands are tested (Batra & Ray, 1985). Likewise, there is a disagreement as to whether (Aad) influences (Ab) for familiar brands. Phelps and Hoy (1996) suggested that the strength of the relationship between (Aad) and (Ab) may be moderated by a number of factors (e.g., brand familiarity). Their suggestion is based on the contradictory findings of earlier works, and it seems clear that additional empirical study of the moderating effects of brand familiarity and prior brand attitude is needed. Therefore, Machleit and Wilson (1988) and Phelps and Hoy (1996) used brand familiarity as a moderator in their studies of relationship between attitude towards advertising and attitude towards brand. Further, Machleit and Wilson (1988) have cited Edell and Burke (1986) which offered preliminary evidence to support the moderating role of brand familiarity in the (Aad – Ab) relationship. In order to reexamine the use of “brand familiarity” as a moderator in the relationship between (Aad) and (Ab), thus, the present conceptual study made use of (PAB) as a moderator.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on what above-mentioned, this framework has been developed for the study (refer figure 1).

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework



CONCLUSION

This study tries to determine a conceptual framework, create a positive consumer's attitude toward advertising and brand attitude by using endorser credibility and to enhance the role of (PAB) as a moderate – either to strengthen or weaken - the relationship between their (Aad) and (Ab). In addition, the study tries to illustrate the moderator role of Prior attitude towards brand (PAB) between consumer's attitude toward advertising and consumer's attitude toward brand. If the study were applied in practice in the future by one of the researchers, the results will inform the company managers how to use endorser credibility well in the long term to improve the concept of attitude toward advertising and brand attitude. In addition, the study will give the researchers idea about the moderator role of Prior attitude towards brand (PAB) between consumer's attitude toward advertising and consumer's attitude toward brand either to strengthen or weaken - the relationship between their (Aad) and (Ab).

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