It Is a Match: The Impact of Congruence between Celebrity Image and Consumer Ideal Self on Endorsement Effectiveness

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ABSTRACT

Using celebrities for promoting products is a popular advertising strategy. The selection of celebrity endorsers is of great concern to advertisers given the large sums of money to secure their participation. To date, most academic research on celebrity endorser effectiveness has focused on endorser characteristics (e.g., source credibility) or a match between a product and the endorser (e.g., match-up hypothesis). The study presented here introduces a new dimension for understanding celebrity endorser effects, the congruence between a consumer's perception of a celebrity's personality characteristics with the consumer's self-concept. Consumers' self-concept is an important influence on purchase decisions (Ericksen, 1997; Graeff, 1996; Sirgy, 1982, 1985), and advertising has been viewed as the most effective tool for creating product images in relation to such self-concept (Sirgy, 1982). Drawn from the two streams of literature, this study proposes and tests an integrative model of celebrity endorsement by examining congruence effects of consumer self-concept and celebrity as well as product and celebrity. Results suggest that ideal congruity (congruence between consumers' ideal self-image and celebrity image) adds explanatory power to a congruence model of celebrity endorser effects. Implications for advertisers and suggestions for future research are discussed. © 2012 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

INTRODUCTION

The use of celebrities for promoting a product is a popular advertising strategy (Shimp, 2000). In today's intense marketing environment, where it is difficult to differentiate products technologically, celebrities play an increasingly important role in advertising as a tool for creating and enhancing brand image and equity. Given the risks associated with the selection of inappropriate celebrities and the large sums of money invested in this type of advertising, it is imperative for advertisers to understand consumer responses to celebrity endorsements and develop an effective approach for celebrity endorser selection.

Positive effects of celebrity endorsement are well documented in extant literature; celebrity endorsers have been found to generate favorable attitudinal and behavioral responses among consumers (Amos, Holmes, & Strutton, 2008; Atkin & Block, 1983; Freiden, 1984; Kamins, Brand, Hoeke, & Moe, 1989).

Most theoretical investigations of celebrity endorsement effectiveness have examined the characteristics of celebrities in the realm of traditional source effects (Ohanian, 1991). Another stream of celebrity endorsement research, labeled the "match-up hypothesis," has investigated a fit or match between a celebrity and the product being endorsed (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1990). While the definition of the fit or match is still murky, the pivotal notion of this hypothesis is that a good match between the celebrity and the product is more effective than a poor match.

Yet prior research has systematically overlooked an important facet of the endorsement configuration: the celebrity/consumer relationship. Specifically, consumers' perception of a celebrity endorser with respect to their own self-concept warrants a careful examination for a thorough understanding of celebrity endorsement effects in advertising. Previous studies have provided ample evidence for the postulation that consumers purchase and consume products congruent with

their self-concept, either actual or ideal (Sirgy, 1982, 1985). Just as consumers purchase and use a brand or product when its image matches their self-image (Sirgy, 1982), a celebrity endorser's influence on a consumer's attitude and choice might also be dependent upon the consumer's perception of the celebrity in reference to his or her self-image.

The main objective of the study reported in this paper is to expand on the current literature by incorporating the neglected dimension of the endorsement process, celebrity/consumer match, in the theoretical framework for explaining celebrity endorsement effectiveness. To this end, the present study simultaneously investigates the effects of (1) a match between a consumer's perception of the celebrity endorser and his/her own ideal self-concept and (2) a fit between the celebrity endorser and the product on major advertising outcome measures: attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). Theoretically, the results of this study should guide future research in this area and identify a fruitful agenda for theoreticians developing models of the endorsement process. Findings of this study also provide strategic insight for practitioners who should match celebrities with products and target audiences.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Celebrity Endorser Effectiveness

Applying the *source credibility model* (Hovland, Jannis, & Kelley, 1953), many studies on endorser effectiveness suggest that a celebrity generally has a greater impact on attitude change and purchase intention than a non-celebrity spokesperson through an established credible image derived from wide recognition and popularity (Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1991; Sternthal, Phillips, & Dholakia, 1978). The literature identifies three dimensions as components of celebrity spokesperson credibility: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Lord & Putrevu, 2009; Ohanian, 1990). *Expertise* is the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions (Hovland, Jannis, & Kelley, 1953; Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Expertise comes from knowledge, experience, or training the spokesperson possesses in the related field (Erdogan, 1999). *Trustworthiness* refers to the audience's confidence in the source for providing information in an objective and honest manner (Erdogan, 1999). Family and friends are often believed to be more trustworthy than salespeople. *Attractiveness* is related to how likable or physically attractive the source is to the audience (Ohanian, 1991).

Although offering insight into the qualities of a celebrity as an effective endorser, the credibility approach has been criticized in that it considers celebrity persuasiveness as autonomous from the product endorsed (i.e., any highly credible celebrity can be effective regardless of the product he or she endorses;

McCracken, 1989). According to the *meaning transfer model* that McCracken (1989) proposed, the various symbolic meanings a consumer associates with a celebrity are transferred to the product being promoted through endorsement, and then from the product to the consumer through purchase and consumption. He also noted that some celebrity endorsements work better than others due to a natural match between the celebrity and the product in terms of cultural meanings and images.

The idea of fit between endorser and product has been further studied under the name of *product match-up hypothesis*. Although no uniform definition of fit or match is yet provided, the literature unvaryingly attests that a good match-up between a celebrity and a product is more effective for generating positive consumer responses to advertising than a bad fit between them (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1990; Kamins & Gupta, 1994). Early studies on the match-up hypothesis examined the postulation in the context of physical attractiveness and found attractive celebrities to be more persuasive when promoting products related to physical beauty (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1990). More recent studies have shown expertise or perceived congruence between celebrity image and product image as a more promising match-up factor (Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Till & Busler, 2000). Regardless of the inconsistency in the conceptual and operational definitions, these results provide consistent empirical support for the central premise of this theoretical approach that a fit between an endorser and the product being endorsed is key to understanding endorsement effectiveness and for an endorsement to be effective, an endorser should be matched with the product.

While the extant literature on celebrity endorsement focuses on the celebrity/product relationship, prior research ignores one important dimension of the celebrity endorsement configuration—a consumer's relationship to a celebrity endorser. Research on consumer personality variables and self-concepts provides a useful framework for understanding the consumer/celebrity relationship.

Self-Concept and Brands

Consumers' self-concept has been empirically shown to influence their consumption behavior. Self-concept is viewed as the sum of an individual's thoughts and feelings about herself or himself with respect to others (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987). There are two core domains of the self. *Actual self* refers to how a person perceives her or himself, whereas ideal self refers to how a person would like to perceive her or himself (Higgins, 1987; Sirgy, 1982). Consumers act in ways that maintain and enhance their self-concept (Graeff, 1996) and are motivated to reach a condition where their actual self matches their relevant ideal self (Higgins, 1987). There appears to be consensus regarding the existence and independent influence of two distinct

self-concept motives: self-esteem (or self-enhancement) and self-consistency (or self-knowledge; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Sirgy, 1982, 1985). The *self-esteem* motive refers to the tendency to seek experiences that enhance self-concept and the *self-consistency* motive denotes the tendency for individuals to behave consistently with their view of themselves (Sirgy, 1982).

In modern society, brands serve psychological and social purposes as symbols for consumers to express their personal identity and facilitate social interactions with others (e.g., Aaker, 1997; Belk, 1988; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Grubb & Stern, 1971; Sirgy, 1982). As a general rule, consumers construct, maintain, and enhance their self-concepts through the brands they purchase and consume. Previous studies suggest that consumers of a specific brand have a self-concept similar to those attributed to other consumers of the same brand, and these self-concepts are significantly different from those attributed to consumers of a competing brand (Grubb & Hupp, 1968; Grubb & Stern, 1971; Sirgy, 1985). The results support the relationship of self-perception to consumption and indicate that consumers seek brands with images that are congruent with their self-image (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Richins, 1994; Sirgy, 1982).

The *self-image/product-image congruence model* conceptualizes the notion of congruency between consumers' self-concepts and brands and proposes that consumers should have favorable attitudes and purchase intentions toward brands perceived to be congruent with their self-image, and relatively less positive attitudes toward brands perceived to be incongruent with their self-image (Graeff, 1996). Parallel to the classifications of actual versus ideal selves and self-esteem versus self-consistency motives, the model suggests two types of self-brand congruency. A match between a brand's image and a consumer's actual self-image is referred to as *self-congruity*, whereas *ideal congruity* denotes a match between a brand's image and a consumer's ideal self-image. Either self- or ideal congruity has stronger effects, depending on other factors. For example, ideal congruity is more important than self-congruity for visibly or conspicuously consumed products versus privately used products (Dolich, 1969).

Celebrity Endorsers and Self-Concept

As reviewed earlier, consumers are constantly moving symbolic properties out of brands into their lives to construct aspects of their self and world. Young consumers also borrow from a celebrity they admire in their identity construction (Boon & Lomore, 2001). This process of self-construction might make a celebrity a kind of exemplary, inspirational figure to consumers as celebrities represent important cultural meanings that many consumers find personally relevant (Peter & Olson, 1996). By purchasing and using the product endorsed by the celebrity, consumers can obtain some of those meanings and use them in constructing a satisfying self-concept

(McCracken, 1989). Thus, celebrity endorsers could activate a consumer's ideal self and be evaluated in relation to it (Peter & Olson, 1996; Sirgy, 1982).

Celebrities can also represent a reference group, which is defined to be an actual or imaginary individual or group conceived of having significant relevance upon an individual's evaluations, aspirations, or behavior (Park & Lessig, 1977). As comparative referents, sports heroes and entertainment figures, frequently utilized as endorsers, provide high standards of achievement to which consumers aspire (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). While consumers are only able to observe the behavior of the celebrities and do not directly interact with them, a consumer's attraction to such "distant others" and the influence this aspiration group exerts on the consumer have been widely assumed in marketing and reflected in the extensive use of celebrities in advertising (Childers & Rao, 1992; Cocanougher & Bruce, 1971; Thomson, 2006).

Identification of Kelman's (1961) social influence theory provides additional theoretical explanations for the celebrity endorsement process (Friedman & Friedman, 1979; Kamins & Gupta, 1994). Among the three processes of social influence—compliance, identification, and internalization—that result in an individual's adopting the attitude advocated by the communicator, identification occurs when individuals conform to the attitude or behavior advocated by another person because these individuals derive satisfaction from the belief that they are like that person. This applies to a situation wherein consumers emulate the attitude or behavior of a celebrity simply because they aspire to be like the celebrity.

The identification process and self-esteem motive together suggest the following relationship between celebrity endorsers and consumers: consumers have a self-esteem motivation to act in a way that establishes and enhances their ideal self, and they consider some celebrities as inspirational figures with desirable meanings to activate their ideal self (Boon & Lomore, 2001; Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Thus, in an attempt to achieve their ideal self-image, consumers tend to conform to the attitudes and behaviors endorsed by a celebrity when the celebrity endorser's image is perceived to be congruent with their ideal self-image. Therefore, it is reasonable to speculate that a high degree of congruence between a celebrity's image and a consumer's ideal self-image will induce favorable responses toward the advertisement and the brand the celebrity endorses. The following hypotheses are formulated to examine the aforementioned relationships of ideal congruity to consumer response to the ad and the brand.

> **H1:** A high degree of congruence between a consumer's ideal self-image and a celebrity endorser's image will lead to

(a) more favorable attitudes toward the ad,

(b) more favorable attitudes toward the brand, and
(c) greater purchase intentions for the brand.

Congruence between Celebrity and Product

Another important factor in determining celebrity endorsement effects is celebrity/product congruence. Although the main focus of this investigation is on the effects of consumer/celebrity ideal congruity on endorsement effectiveness, it is intended to provide a comprehensive illustration of the celebrity endorsement process by including celebrity/product congruence in the picture. Research on match-up hypothesis has shown that endorsements are more effective when the images or messages the endorsers carry are congruent with the endorsed products (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1990; Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Lynch & Schuler, 1994; Misra & Beatty, 1990; Till & Busler, 1998, 2000; Till, Stanley, & Priluck, 2008). Early studies examined the match-up effects in the area of physical attractiveness and suggested that attractive celebrity endorsers are more effective than unattractive spokespersons only when the product is related to attractiveness (e.g., perfume, cosmetics, and hair care products; Kahle & Homer, 1985). Conversely, technology-related, functional products might not yield this type of effect due to the irrelevance of attractiveness to the product type (Till & Busler, 2000).

While attractiveness or expertise of a celebrity serves as an important match-up factor, Kamins and Gupta (1994) and Misra and Beatty (1990) emphasize that consumer perception of the congruence between the celebrity and the product being endorsed at an overall level is more important in empirically testing the congruence effects because a wide range of factors jointly determine the consumer's assessment of congruence between the celebrity and the product. In fact, results of their studies found that the general notion of the celebrity/product congruence had significant effects on advertisement and brand evaluations; when a high degree of congruence was perceived, more favorable evaluations were produced. The aforementioned effects of the perceived congruence between the celebrity and the product on consumer response to the ad and the brand are summarized in the following hypotheses.

H2: A high degree of congruence between the celebrity endorser and the product being endorsed will lead to

(a) more favorable attitudes toward the ad,
(b) more favorable attitudes toward the brand, and
(c) greater purchase intentions for the brand.

Attitudes toward the ad, attitudes toward the brand, and purchase intent have long been examined as advertising effectiveness variables and their interrelationships have been theorized and corroborated in prior research (Heath & Gaeth, 1994; Kalwani & Silk, 1982; MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). Findings on the Dual Mediation Hypothesis in particular attest the consistent sequence of relationships among those variables, which suggests the effects of ad attitudes on brand attitudes that subsequently influence purchase intention (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986). Thus, the following relationships are added to explain endorsement effectiveness with a through path model.

H3a: Attitude toward the ad positively and directly relates to attitude toward the brand.

H3b: Attitude toward the brand positively and directly relates to purchase intentions.

In summary, the present study is intended to extend the current theorization of celebrity endorsement by simultaneously assessing the effects of (1) congruence between consumer ideal-concept and celebrity image and (2) congruence between celebrity endorser and product on attitudes toward the ad, attitudes toward the brand, and purchase intent. In Figure 1, a path model depicting the hypothesized causal relationships among the variables is presented. While empirical evidence already exists for positive celebrity/product congruence effects, a comprehensive model with the inclusion of
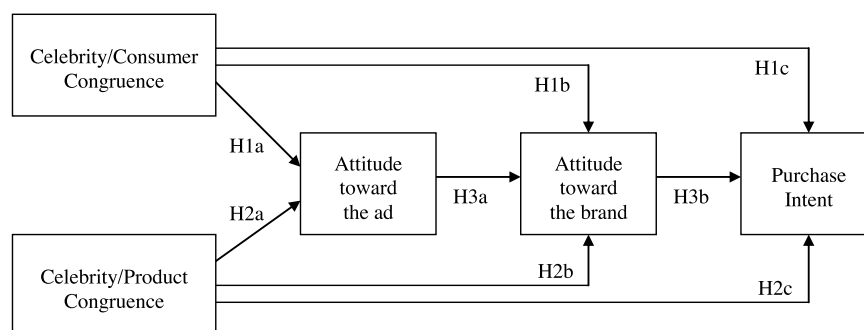
Figure 1. Hypothesized model: relationships from celebrity/consumer congruence and celebrity/ product congruence to ad attitude, brand attitude, and purchase intent.

this component is deemed suitable and necessary for robust testing of the combined effects of both forms of congruence that will shed light on the complete picture of celebrity endorsement effectiveness.

METHOD

Advertisements

Prior to the main study, a pretest was conducted to determine appropriate celebrities and products. Seventy-four male (52.7%) and female (47.3%) undergraduates enrolled in advertising courses at a major Midwestern university were asked to name popular movie stars they liked and disliked and then match product categories with each celebrity they listed. Participants were then instructed to provide adjectives describing each celebrity' image they could think of. Among the most frequently named celebrities, Julia Roberts and Drew Barrymore were selected as suitable celebrity endorsers because both were familiar to the participants but differed in their images. The selection of the celebrities was intended to create sufficient variations in the participants' perceptions of the degree of congruence between their ideal image and the celebrity image.

Perfume and a personal digital assistant (PDA) were selected as attractiveness- versus technology-related products to generate variations in the participants' perceived degree of congruence between the celebrity and the product. Physically attractive celebrities, such as the movie stars chosen for this study, might be considered to be more appropriate for endorsing attractiveness-related or self-expressive products rather than utilitarian or technology-related products (Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001; Till & Busler, 2000), which would lead to consumer perception of higher congruence between the celebrities and attractiveness-related products versus functional or technology-related products. In fact, perfumes were listed most as an appropriate product category for the celebrities in the pretest. Similar to the selection of celebrities, the products were chosen to achieve an adequate range of celebrity/product congruence perceptions. Both products were deemed personally relevant and accessible to the study participants and the selected celebrities had not previously endorsed products in either category. A fictitious brand name, "Aerius" was adopted from a previous study (Till & Busler, 1998) and used for both products to prevent possible confounding effects of an existing brand.

Reflecting the celebrity and product selections and their combinations, four full-page, black and white print advertisements ((1) Julia Roberts endorsing a perfume, (2) Julia Roberts endorsing a PDA, (3) Drew Barrymore endorsing a perfume, and (4) Drew Barrymore endorsing a PDA) were created for use as the ads in the study. Each ad was identical in format, headline, and copy, and featured a large headshot of the celebrity, a small photo of either perfume or PDA, a brand name, and a headline. No specific product information was contained in the ads. Those ads were all created by a professional graphic designer to look as real as any found in magazines.

Participants and Procedure

A total of 251 male (42.6%) and female (57.4%) undergraduates enrolled in introductory advertising and communications courses at the same university participated in the study. Their ages ranged from 18 to 35 years, with an average of 21 years. Over 80% of the participants were Caucasians and 98% were single. In group settings, participants randomly received one of four booklets containing a front page of instructions, the ad, and a questionnaire. After a few minutes of reviewing the ad, participants responded to the questionnaire. After completing the questionnaire, they were debriefed and dismissed.

Since the image that consumers had in their mind about the celebrity before the exposure to the ad was critical and necessary for determining the degree of congruence between the celebrity image and their ideal self-image, manipulation checks detected those who did not correctly identify the celebrity in the ad. Thirty-nine participants (29 males and 10 females) did not know or recall who the endorser was and excluded from the sample for further analysis. Ten of them had Julia Roberts and 29 saw the ad with Drew Barrymore as the endorser. This screening procedure led to a final sample size of 212 including 78 males (36.8%) and 134 females (63.2%).

Measures

The questionnaire consisted of four main sections. In the first part, participants evaluated attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intent. Attitude toward the ad was measured on a 7-point, five-item, semantic differential scale anchored by "good/bad," "favorable/unfavorable," "like/dislike," "interesting/boring," and "pleasant/unpleasant" ($\alpha = 0.93$). Participants indicated their attitude toward the brand on a 7-point, four-item, semantic differential scale anchored with "favorable/unfavorable," "good/bad," "like/dislike," and "pleasant/unpleasant" ($\alpha = 0.92$; Graeff, 1996; Sirgy, 1985). The participants also were asked how likely it would be that they would consider the advertised brand the next time they purchased a perfume (or a PDA) and rated their agreement with the statement "the next time I purchase perfume (PDAs), I will buy the advertised brand in the ad." These items were 7-point bipolar scales anchored by "extremely unlikely/extremely likely" and "strongly disagree/strongly agree" ($\alpha = 0.71$).

The second section assessed perceived congruence between celebrity endorser and product endorsed was measured on a 7-point, four-item, semantic differential

scale with the endpoints of "compatible/not compatible," "good fit/bad fit," "relevant/irrelevant," and "good match/bad match" ($\alpha = 0.94$; Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Till & Busler, 2000). Participants were also asked to rate the celebrity endorser's image on a 7-point, 15-item, bipolar scale on attributes adopted from the previous self-concept research (Graeff, 1996; Malhotra, 1981; Sirgy, 1982, 1985). The image dimensions were rugged–delicate, excitable–calm, uncomfortable–comfortable, dominating–submissive, thrifty–indulgent, pleasant–unpleasant, contemporary–noncontemporary, organized–unorganized, rational–emotional, youthful–mature, formal–informal, orthodox–liberal, complex–simple, colorless–colorful, and modest–vain. These semantic differential scales have been considered reliable and effective in related research (Sirgy, 1982). As a screening question on celebrity endorsers, participants were asked if they knew who the endorser was in each advertisement. For those who recognized the endorser, an open-ended question asked for the endorser's name.

In the third section, measures were employed to assess if there were differences in perceptions across the two celebrities. Participants were asked to rate the credibility of the endorser using a 7-point, semantic differential scale that was developed by Ohanian (1990) for measuring celebrity endorsers' perceived attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. Five items anchored by "attractive/unattractive," "classy/not classy," "beautiful/ugly," "elegant/plain," and "sexy/not sexy" measured attractiveness ($\alpha = 0.87$); five items with endpoints of "sincere/insincere," "dependable/undependable," "honest/dishonest," "reliable/unreliable," and "trustworthy/untrustworthy" assessed trustworthiness ($\alpha = 0.90$); and five items with anchors of "expert/not an expert," "experienced/inexperienced," "knowledgeable/unknowledgeable," "qualified/unqualified," and "skilled/unskilled" were used to measure expertise ($\alpha = 0.87$). In addition, their familiarity and likeability were each measured on a single-item, 7-point, semantic differential scale ("familiar/unfamiliar" and "likeable/dislikeable").

Lastly, demographic questions and measures of a consumer's ideal self-image were included. The ideal self scale was identical to the celebrity image scale for the purpose of obtaining a congruity (or incongruence) index score by comparing the ratings on the same dimensions, following the procedure suggested in the prior literature (Ericksen, 1997; Graeff, 1996; Sirgy, 1985). (A detailed explanation of the index score calculation is provided in Results section.)

RESULTS

The proposed relationships were tested with a path analysis. The variable of main focus in this study was congruence between consumer's ideal self-image and the celebrity endorser's image. Ideal congruity assessed

this congruence and was estimated by summing the difference scores across the 15 image dimensions between ideal self-perception and celebrity image perception, resulting in a single index score (this procedure is described in detail below). Therefore, a path analysis similar to the one employed in previous research (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000) was deemed appropriate for simultaneous testing of the hypothesized linkages between this single indicator variable with other variables in the model (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993).

Prior to path model testing, all of the other scales with multiple indicators were assessed with a confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 5 and the results suggest that all of the items loaded significantly high on the relevant construct ($p < 0.01$). Table 1 reports the loadings for each factor. Subsequently, a single variable measuring each of the variables was created by averaging up the corresponding item scores. The descriptive statistics and correlations appear in Table 2.

Ideal Congruity

The measurement of self-congruity and ideal congruity has varied by investigator. A study conducted by Sirgy and Danes (1982) assessed and compared the predictive validity of different congruity models. The absolute-difference model was found to be more predictive of product preference and purchase intention than other models such as the simple-difference model and the "Euclidean distance" model. Accordingly, the index of ideal congruity in this study was obtained using the following absolute-difference formula (Ericksen, 1997;

Table 1. Factor Loadings of Indicators.

Constructs	Indicators	Un-standard	Standard
Product/celebrity congruence	Compatible/not compatible	1.000*	0.913
	Bad fit/good fit	1.077	0.940
	Relevant/irrelevant	0.900	0.796
	Good match/bad match	1.031	0.904
Attitude toward the ad	Good/bad	1.000*	0.938
	Unpleasant/pleasant	0.626	0.781
	Favorable/unfavorable	0.883	0.922
	Boring/interesting	0.749	0.725
	Like/dislike	0.942	0.894
Attitude toward the brand	Good/bad	1.000*	0.884
	Unpleasant/pleasant	0.970	0.850
	Favorable/unfavorable	0.985	0.860
	Like/dislike	0.978	0.863
Purchase intent	Likelihood	1.000*	0.740
	Will buy	1.021	0.738

Note: All coefficients are significant at $p < 0.01$.
*Reference indicator.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations.

Variable Name	Range	Mean	SD	Correlations 1	2	3	4	5
1. Ideal congruity	4–52	19.79	7.41	1				
2. Product/endorser congruence	1–7	5.01	1.28	0.015*	1			
3. Attitude toward the ad	1–7	4.82	1.07	− 0.135*	0.583**	1		
4. Attitude toward the brand	1–7	4.94	0.97	− 0.059	0.380**	0.525**	1	
5. Purchase intent	1–7	3.46	1.32	− 0.199**	0.238**	0.412**	0.445**	1

Note: $N = 212$.
*Significant at $p = 0.05$, **significant at $p = 0.01$.

Graeff, 1996; Sirgy, 1985):

$$\sum_{i=1}^{n} |C_{ij} - I_{ij}|,$$

where C_{ij} = celebrity image (i) of individual (j) and I_{ij} = ideal self-image (i) of individual (j).

The resulting ideal congruity score represents the sum of the distances perceived by a consumer between his or her ideal image and the celebrity's image in the ad, across all characteristics measured. The ideal congruity score ranged from 4 to 52 with a mean of 19.79 and a median of 19. Interpretively, the smaller the ideal congruity index score, the more congruent the individual perceives the celebrity compared to his or her ideal self.

Testing Differences across Groups

Before testing the proposed hypotheses, initial analyses were performed to ensure that there were no systematic differences across the four varieties of the ads shown to the participants. No significant differences were observed between the two endorsers in their credibility (attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise), likeability and familiarity ($p > 0.05$). Table 3 summarizes these results. Results of a t-test also indicated no significant difference in the perceived congruence between the product and the endorser ($t_{(1, 210)} = 1.96$, $p > 0.05$) although perfume was seen as slightly more congruent with the celebrities ($M = 5.19$) than a PDA ($M = 4.84$), consistent with the expectation. A series of ANOVAs were additionally performed to examine differences in scores on the variables of interest (i.e., attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intent) across the four versions of the ads and yielded no significant differences ($p > 0.05$). Additionally, gender differences were assessed due to a concern that only female celebrities were employed and no significant differences between males and females were found ($p > 0.05$). In light of these nonsignificant differences among the materials and between the genders, data from the different celebrity and product parings were collapsed for further analysis across both genders and a path analysis with the entire data set was pursued to test the proposed hypotheses and investigate the interrelationships among the relevant variables.

Testing Hypotheses

The hypothesized causal linkages were tested with a path analysis using AMOS 5. Of the eight proposed causal relationships, five were statistically significant in the expected direction. The first set of hypotheses examined the direct effects of ideal congruity on attitude toward the ad (H1a), attitude toward the brand (H1b), and purchase intent (H1c). While ideal congruity was found to exert direct positive effects on attitude toward the ad ($\beta = -0.144$, $p < 0.01$) and purchase intention ($\beta = -0.177$, $p < 0.01$), no significant relation between ideal congruity and attitude toward the brand was observed ($\beta = 0.001$, $p > 0.05$). It should be noted that the negative path coefficients in fact indicate positive relationships because the smaller the ideal congruity index, the more congruent the consumer views the celebrity compared to his or her ideal self, as explained earlier. Therefore, H1a and H1c were supported whereas H1b was disconfirmed.

The second set of hypotheses assessed the direct effects of celebrity/product congruence on attitude toward the ad (H2a), attitude toward the brand (H2b), and purchase intent (H2c). The perceived congruence between the celebrity endorser and product appeared to have a direct impact on attitude toward the ad only ($\beta = 0.489$, $p < 0.001$), while exerting no significant influences on attitude toward the brand ($\beta = 0.086$, $p > 0.05$) and purchase intent ($\beta = 0.091$, $p > 0.05$). Thus, the results confirmed H2a but disconfirmed H2b and H2c.

The last group of hypotheses tested the causal sequence of the advertising outcome variables and, as predicted, attitude toward the ad was shown to have a direct impact on attitude toward the brand ($\beta = 0.417$, $p < 0.001$) that subsequently influenced purchase intent ($\beta = 0.544$, $p < 0.001$). Hence, both H3a and H3b were supported. The goodness-of-fit indices suggested that the model fit the data well; $\chi^2 = 8.40$, df = 2, $p < 0.05$; Joreskog-Sorbom Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = 0.99; Adjusted GFI (AGFI) = 0.89; Bentler-Bonett Normed Fit Index (NFI) = 0.96; Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.97; Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) = 0.06. Table 4 presents the parameter estimates and

Table 3. Source Characteristics of Celebrity Endorsers.

	Endorser type	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	df	p
Attractiveness	Julia Roberts	5.73	1.02	0.40	212	0.69
	Drew Barrymore	5.67	1.02			
Trustworthiness	Julia Roberts	5.25	1.04	1.19	212	0.236
	Drew Barrymore	5.08	0.95			
Expertise	Julia Roberts	4.92	1.10	0.81	212	0.419
	Drew Barrymore	4.80	1.00			
Likeability	Julia Roberts	6.32	0.99	0.76	212	0.446
	Drew Barrymore	6.21	1.11			
Familiarity	Julia Roberts	6.35	1.11	1.88	212	0.062
	Drew Barrymore	6.03	1.28			
Ideal congruity	Julia Roberts	19.33	7.91	0.85	212	0.396
	Drew Barrymore	20.23	6.95			

Note: Julia Roberts ($N = 113$) and Drew Barrymore ($N = 99$).

Table 4. Path Coefficients and Fit Indices.

| Relationship	Proposed Model		Final Model	
From → To	Unstandard	Standard	Unstandard	Standard
Ideal congruity → ad attitude	−0.021*	−0.144	−0.021*	−0.144
Ideal congruity → brand attitude	0.000	0.001	−	−
Ideal congruity → purchase intent	−0.031*	−0.177	−0.031*	−0.173
Celebrity/product congruence → ad attitude	0.489*	0.584	0.489*	0.584
Celebrity/product congruence → brand attitude	0.086	0.113	−	−
Celebrity/product congruence → purchase intent	0.091	0.088	−	−
Ad attitude → brand attitude	0.417*	0.459	0.476*	0.525
Brand attitude → purchase Intent	0.544*	0.401	0.590*	0.435
Goodness-of-fit indices				
χ^2 (df)	8.397 (2), $p < 0.05$		12.695 (5), $p < 0.05$	
Joreskog–Sorbom goodness-of-fit index	0.985		0.977	
Adjusted GFI	0.885		0.930	
Bentler–Bonett normed-fit index	0.963		0.945	
Comparative-fit index	0.971		0.965	
RMR	0.063		0.090	

*Significant at $p = 0.01$.

the goodness-of-fit statistics for the originally proposed model.

In an attempt to refine the initially tested model and achieve parsimony, the nonsignificant relationships were tested in the second phase of the analysis by systematically relaxing a restriction and examining the resultant change in chi-square. That is, chi-square indices of the models without each of the paths were re-estimated and compared to the original model. None of the paths (1) from idea congruity to attitude toward the brand, (2) from celebrity/product congruence to attitude toward the brand, and (3) from celebrity/product congruence to purchase intent yielded significant changes in chi-square: (1) $\chi^2_{\text{difference}} = .01$, df = 1, $p > 0.05$; (2) $\chi^2_{\text{difference}} = .54$, df = 1, $p > 0.05$; (3) $\chi^2_{\text{difference}} = .67$, df = 1, $p > 0.05$. Consequently, all of
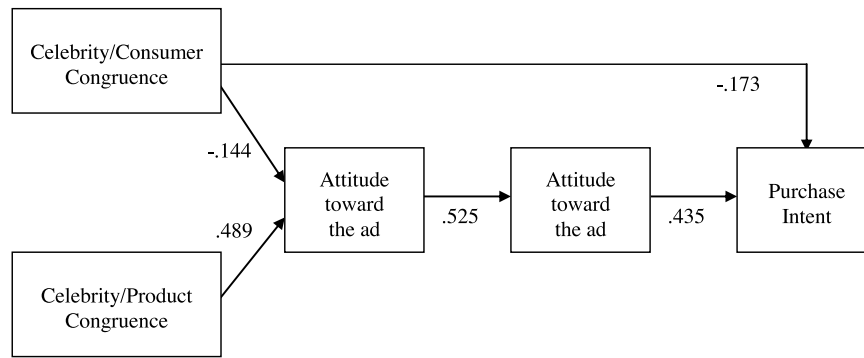
Figure 2. Path diagram of the final model. *Note*: The coefficients (standardized) of the solid paths are significant at $p = 0.01$.

the three paths, which did not significantly contribute to the improvement of the model fit, were removed. Parameter estimates for the revised model are reported in Table 4.

Overall, this modified model accounts for the data well; $\chi^2 = 12.70$, df $= 5$, $p < 0.05$; GFI $= 98$; AGFI $= 0.93$; NFI $= 95$; CFI $= 0.97$; RMR $= 0.09$. For further comparison of the revised model and the original model, the chi-square difference between the two models was estimated. While the difference score ($\chi^2_{\text{difference}} = 4.30$, df $= 3$, $p > 0.05$) did not indicate significant improvement of the modified model in the fit compared to the original model, the adjusted model was chosen as a final model because it is more parsimonious without any nonsignificant causal linkages that did not add explanations to the model. In addition, the χ^2/df ratio (2.54) of the modified model is lower than 3, the criterion for a good fit, whereas the χ^2/df ratio (4.20) of the initial model is above 3. The final model with the standardized path coefficients is presented in Figure 2.

DISCUSSION

Using celebrities is a common, noticeable practice in advertising campaigns. Despite the considerable amount of cost to secure celebrity endorsers, this promotional strategy is still popular as celebrities promote and sell products well due to their stardom and visible presence. Celebrities featured in advertising are easily recognized and attract attention from consumers. Celebrity endorsers are shown to elicit favorable attitudinal and behavioral responses toward the advertisement and brand employing them. The literature suggests that the use of a celebrity as an endorser is more persuasive when consumers perceive a fit between the celebrity and the promoted product. However, no research to date has addressed another principal aspect of the celebrity endorsement configuration: the relationship between the celebrity and the consumers.

To explore the celebrity/consumer connection, the present study investigated the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in relation to consumers' self-concept, which has been evidenced to influence consumption behaviors. The congruence between consumer self-image

and celebrity image was found to play an important role in the celebrity endorsement process. When a consumer perceives a celebrity endorser as possessing an image close to his or her ideal self-image, the consumer is likely to rate the ad as more favorable and report greater purchase intentions. In conjunction with the celebrity/consumer congruence, the previously shown effects of a match between product image and celebrity image were assessed in the model for completeness. The celebrity/product congruence appeared to have a direct, positive effect on attitude toward the ad. Yet no direct influences of such congruence on brand attitudes or purchase intent were found. Although the data did not support direct connections between both forms of congruence and brand evaluations, the corroborated sequential influences of attitude toward the ad to attitude toward the brand and purchase intent suggests the merit of studying the two factors driving celebrity endorsement effects via both direct and indirect impacts. Besides, the artificial condition and single-exposure setting of testing theories in the lab are likely to minimize these connections, and the findings should not be used at this time to dismiss the possibility of a direct influence on brand evaluations.

From the managerial perspective, the findings of this study provide strategic insight into celebrity selection decisions. In fact, in a survey of advertising professionals in the United Kingdom, the celebrity/target audience match and the celebrity/product match were ranked as the first and second most important criteria considered in the selection of a celebrity endorser (Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001). In support of the practice-based wisdom, the findings offer a theoretical account and empirical evidence for the importance of the two essential elements of the celebrity selection formula as well as shed light on how to accomplish the challenging task. Celebrities are widely recognized and carry a variety of meanings (Thomson, 2006). Based on the established images the celebrities possess, consumers would perceive them as similar to or different from their ideal image of themselves. This perception of congruity or incongruity between the consumers and celebrity endorsers would determine, at least in part, advertising effectiveness. Accordingly, beyond demographic characteristics or popularity and

likeability rankings, a celebrity's image should be deliberated and matched with the target audience's self-image as well as the product's image. In the process, it would be critical to identify the relevant and salient image dimensions that determine the overall congruence perceptions of the three constituents that would influence the equity of both the product and the celebrity (Seno & Lukas, 2007).

In light of the results of this study, several issues appear to warrant further research attention. First, the nature of a match between celebrity and product is something that needs further explication. In this study, two products were used to provide a range of overall match perceptions. Both the PDA and the perfume were viewed as a moderate match to the celebrities used. Indeed, how the perception of match is created, and its effects when low, are still at issue.

Similarly, the celebrity/consumer connection calls for additional examinations. Although two celebrities were employed to generate varied image evaluations, the characteristics of the selected celebrities (female actresses) might limit the generalizability of the results. Further studies should examine the relationship with a wide range of celebrities from different fields (e.g., sports figures, music artists). Further, while this study employed an indirect approach to investigating the relationship (participants were not aware that they compared themselves to the celebrity) and consumers' implicit self-esteem motive was assumed, their conscious assessment of the similarity between the celebrity's image and their own self-image might have different effects. In addition, the literature suggests that there are several kinds of self-concept, future studies could also investigate if a discrepancy or incongruity between consumers' actual self and other domains of self (e.g., the ought self) has an impact on their purchase intent toward certain types of products (Higgins, 1987). It would be also interesting to examine if these different selves and the corresponding congruity or incongruity become more salient and have stronger impacts, depending on different product types or situations (Markus & Kunda, 1986).

Another issue for future research to delve into is that the demographic profile of the sample, young adults, may have contributed to the solid connections between ideal congruity and attitude toward the ad as well as purchase intent (Boon & Lomore, 2001). It is arguable that as consumers age, they may not be as motivated to achieve a different self, or to believe that a brand can help in that achievement. Further, young consumers may be more enamored with celebrities than older consumers. Perhaps consumers of different ages and gender vary in their susceptibility to celebrity endorsements. It would be also worthwhile to assess potential cultural variables that may impact the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement strategies (Biswas, Hussain, & O'Donnell, 2009). Further studies with a range of consumers can provide a fuller picture.

Finally, additional research is needed in testing an entire system of the relationships among the variables that have been identified in the celebrity endorsement literature. For instance, the perception of congruity between a consumer's ideal self and a celebrity's image might influence credibility perceptions of the celebrity endorser. Past research focused on the effects of celebrity credibility on advertising and brand evaluations. Yet little is known about what determines credibility perception of the celebrity. Consumers who think of the celebrity endorser as a match to their ideal self-image would view the celebrity as more credible than those who do not. Future studies can investigate if credibility ratings improve when consumers perceive a celebrity's image as congruent with their own ideal self. Another related question arises as to the potential impact of consumer/celebrity congruence on consumers' responses to celebrity endorsers' negative scandals. Consumers show varied reactions to celebrities' misdeeds and their relationship with the celebrities might be a critical determinant of the perceptions.

In sum, this paper contributes to the body of our knowledge on the celebrity endorsement effectiveness by theoretically and empirically examining the previously overlooked connection between the celebrity and the consumer. Given the robust findings of positive celebrity/product congruence effects in the literature, the significant impact of the celebrity/consumer congruence is noteworthy and suggests that the theoretical approach of this study that takes the celebrity/consumer match into consideration is indeed a fruitful venue for future research. Both forms of congruence should be considered for an accurate and full understanding of celebrity endorsement effects. Research efforts should be continued to theorize the dynamic process of how the consumer, celebrity, and product jointly determine the celebrity endorsement effects.

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