

Celebrity Endorsement And Purchase Intentions: The Role Of Message Framing, Regulatory Focus, And Product Type

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intentions is grounded and well established. However, the moderating effects of message framing, regulatory focus and product type on this relationship have received very little attention in the marketing literature. In response, this article discusses what role message framing, regulatory focus, and product type play in moderating the effect of celebrity endorsement on purchase intentions. Specifically, this study examines the effect of positive and negative message framing; hedonic and utilitarian product type; promotion and prevention regulatory focus on the relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intentions. The types of message framing will not have the same effect. When considering the advantages of positively and negatively framed messages, advertisers should also take into account the effect of product type and regulatory focus. From the review of the literature, a series of research propositions are developed. These research propositions will be of immense value for advertisers and future empirical testing. The propositions developed in this study help compare and expand the existing literature on celebrity endorsement. The effectiveness of the messages conveyed by the celebrities will improve when regulatory orientation, message framing, and product type match. The theoretical and practical implications of the research propositions are discussed.

JEL Classification: M31, M37

Keywords: celebrity endorsement; purchase intentions; message framing; regulatory focus; product type

INTRODUCTION

Due to the increase in competition, firms engage in new strategies to acquire a significant market share and to survive (Keller, 2016). Firms struggle to garner consumers' attention to messages designed by marketers. Due to intense competition, consumers' expectations of the products and services offered by the firms have increased (Seno & Lukas, 2007). As a consequence, firms have started asking celebrities to take the products to customers to make them buy the products of the firms. Competing firms engage musicians, footballers, actors, and actresses to endorse their brands. Since celebrity endorsement influences the effectiveness of an advertisement, it is not surprising that firms engage in this type of practice. Talent, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and success are the attributes of celebrity endorsers that

influence the customers to buy the products (Branchik & Chowdhury, 2017).

McCracken (1989, p. 310) defines a celebrity endorser as "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement." The role of celebrities is to gain the attention of the audience and to influence the purchase behavior of the customers (Zhou & Whitla, 2013). Literature has documented well the uses of employing celebrity endorsers (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Keel & Nataraajan, 2012). Prior research has stressed that celebrity endorsement is a multi-billion enterprise. To accomplish a unique position in consumers' minds, firms are upbeat that celebrities can help them to do so (Wei & Lu, 2013).

Marketers agree that advertising messages that involve celebrities garner higher audience attention, greater appeal and recall than advertising messages that do not involve celebrities (Spry et al., 2011). Marketers invest huge money to make sure that the products are aligned with the celebrities with a belief that celebrities can influence the purchase decisions of the consumers. Celebrities have accomplished much in their respective disciplines and a large proportion of people recognize them. Further, celebrity endorsement influences advertising effectiveness, recall of the brand, and the consumers' purchase behavior (Hollensen & Schimmelpfennig, 2013; Spry et al., 2011). Consumers tend to associate themselves with the products celebrities endorse. This association aids them to recall celebrity endorsers' messages, which in turn influences purchase behavior. Social influence theory (SIT) can well be used to explain celebrity endorsement. Social influence theory explains that individuals within a social network display behavior patterns that are influenced by others (Li, 2013).

This research examines the two-sided format in which both positive and negative statements regarding the product are made by the celebrity spokesperson. Perceived credibility is increased because of the enhancement of both celebrity effectiveness and advertising effectiveness. Comparisons are made between two-sided format and one-sided format where the celebrity spokesperson speaks about only the positive aspects of the product.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Message Framing

Message framing is "the presentation of choice alternatives, either in a positive or negative manner" (Huber et al., 1987; p.137). A glass of water can be used to explain message framing. If people say they have a half-full glass of water, it is a positively framed message. If people say they have a half-empty glass of water, it is a negatively framed message (Dunegan, 1993). If there is risk and uncertainty, Prospect Theory states a message that is negatively framed is more likely to play a persuasive role than a message that is positively framed (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984).

Message presentation is significant in communication. When the message is appropriately framed, marketers can persuade more consumers and sales can be increased (Martin & Marshall, 1999). In this type of framing, a "positive" frame is the one in which consumers obtain a gain or avoid a loss by buying a certain product. A "negative" frame is the one in which consumers forego a gain or experience a loss by not buying a certain product (Yi & Baumgartner, 2008). If marketers can understand how framing affects advertising messages, it will help them to create effective advertising copy and layouts (Arora, 2000).

Goal framing is the focus in this study in which "the goal of an action or behavior is framed" (Levin et al., 1998; p.150). Positive or negative message framing can be presented to the consumers (Levin & Gaeth, 1988). The gains of buying the product are stressed in positive framing, whereas losses if the product is not purchased, are stressed in negative framing (Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990).

Previous research indicates the way that the presentation of the advertising messages is done (i.e., how labeling and framing of the information are done) may have a significant effect on the purchase decisions of the consumers (Smith, 1996). In persuasive communication, the frame type is frequently used. Topic and the situations in which consumers are in play a significant role in deciding the effect of frame type.

When integration happens, negatively presented information has a greater weight and is more influential than positively presented information (Lau, 1985). It seems likely that when negative information is presented rather than positive information, consumers consider the negative information to be more informative. We argue that two-sided messages require greater integration since customers receive both positive and negative sides of the information. Based on the above arguments, we predict that

H1: As compared to one-sided celebrity endorsement messages, two-sided celebrity endorsement messages will result in a greater effect on purchase intentions when they are negatively framed

Product Type

To distinguish between hedonic and utilitarian products, the function is the key. Utilitarian products perform instrumental functions. Linkage can be made between product features and product utility. Hedonic products elicit emotions and fantasies. Pleasure evoking is the function of hedonic products (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). For utilitarian products, consumers process information analytically and gather product information (Chaudhuri & Ligos, 2006). Many options are compared and objective features are taken into consideration (Park & Moon, 2003). For hedonic products, the information does not play a vital role in the decision-making process of consumers (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985). Holistic evaluation forms an integral part of hedonic products and the final decisions for hedonic products are made on emotional processes (To et al., 2007).

Prior research has noted that different types of products elicit varying affective states (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Researchers have stressed the distinction between utilitarian and hedonic consumption. Affective or sensory gratification is the primary reason for consuming hedonic products, whereas cognitively oriented benefits are the primary reason for consuming utilitarian products (Woods, 1960). Further, pleasure orientation, sensory experience, fun, and fantasy are associated with hedonic products. Consumers experience pleasure while consuming hedonic products. Imaginative constructions of reality are associated with hedonic consumption and provide means for entertainment. Consumers may experience guilt before or after consuming hedonic products. On the other hand, people use rational cognition to comprehend utilitarian products since they have functional and practical benefits and offer cognitively oriented benefits. Consumers involve in goal-oriented consumption which fulfills a basic need or performs a function task. Practicality and necessity are the distinct features of utilitarian products and consumers rarely experience sensual pleasure or guilt while consuming utilitarian products (Strahilevitz, 1999). We argue that to process two-sided messages, consumers have to cognitively evaluate the messages. Based on the above arguments, we predict that

H2: As compared to one-sided celebrity endorsement messages, two-sided celebrity

endorsement messages will result in a greater effect on purchase intentions when the product is utilitarian.

Regulatory Focus

Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997) suggests that viewers' regulatory focus may play a significant role in predicting advertising persuasion. Generally, people prefer pleasure and try to avoid pain. Building on this principle, regulatory focus theory differentiates between promotion goals and prevention goals (Higgins, 1997; 1998). Promotion goals are related to attaining positive outcomes and prevention goals are related to avoiding negative outcomes (Higgins, 1997). Insights on how the two types of goals can be attained are provided by research on self-regulatory focus. Individuals may try to achieve the desired end state by minimizing the absence or maximizing the presence of positive outcomes. Along similar lines, individuals may try to achieve an undesired end state by maximizing the absence or minimizing the presence of negative outcomes. In addition to the regulatory focus theory, prior research argues message's regulatory focus influences advertising persuasion. Prior research shows that people's persuasion and recollection of the advertising claims get enhanced when advertisers present information in advertising that is well in alignment with individuals' regulatory focus.

According to regulatory focus theory, different motivational systems determine people's motivation to get the outcomes that are desired. To get these outcomes, a consumer may choose to either "approach actual self-states that match the desired end-state or avoid actual self-states that mismatch the desired end-state" (Crowe & Higgins 1997; p.117). Individuals may try to maximize the positive outcomes' occurrence. Thus, they drive toward scenarios that represent "gains" and away from scenarios that represent "nongains." Consumers might have a preference to minimize the negative outcomes' occurrence (e.g., responsibilities and duties). The absence and presence of undesirable outcomes motivate them and thus they drive toward approaching "no loss" situations and avoiding "losses". The motivational system that makes people approach positive outcomes is called "promotion focus" while the system that makes people avoid negative outcomes is termed "prevention focus". Recent research has

explored the role of regulatory focus in persuasion and found that context and/or frame of the appeal plays a role in determining the effectiveness of an appeal advocating the attainment of promotion or prevention goals. Chernev (2004) found that a greater preference for the status quo is shown by prevention-focused individuals than by promotion-focused individuals. Lee and Aaker (2004) showed that promotion-focused individuals were persuaded more by gain-framed appeals and prevention-focused individuals were persuaded more by loss-framed appeals.

The regulatory focus influences the extent to which people depend on the message's substantial arguments and/or on affective responses when they form judgments (Pham & Avnet, 2004). Prevention-focused individuals depend more on the message's substance than promotion-focused individuals, whereas promotion-focused individuals are more likely to depend on the affective responses toward an advertisement. The credibility feeling evoked by an advertisement is an affective response, and two-sided advertisements elicit this feeling to a greater extent (Sternthal et al., 1978). So, two-sided messages will generally have higher credibility than one-sided messages. Promotion-focused individuals more heavily depend on this positive cue. Hence, we predict that

H3: As compared to one-sided celebrity endorsement messages, two-sided celebrity endorsement messages will result in a greater effect on purchase intentions when the consumers are promotion-focused

DISCUSSION

Celebrity endorsement plays an effective role in gaining consumer interests. It is well understood that celebrity endorsements significantly impact purchase intentions. This research focuses on the moderating effects of message framing, regulatory focus, and product type on the above-mentioned relationship which is rarely examined in the previous studies. The effects of positive and negative message framing, hedonic and utilitarian product type, promotion, and prevention regulatory focus on the relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intentions are explored in the present study. The research propositions, which are developed by existing

relevant literature provide theoretical and practical implications for future researchers. By empirically testing these research propositions, the researchers and advertisers will get further insight into the relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intentions.

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