

## THE EFFECTIVE USE OF ENDORSEMENTS IN ADVERTISING: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN "MATCH-UP" AND INVOLVEMENT

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*This study investigated the effectiveness of endorsers based on product/endorser match and consumer involvement level. Fictitious endorsers and products were employed in an experiment which found that the influence of the well-matched endorser on brand attitudes increased with involvement level. In general, the findings support the idea that match-up is centrally processed and suggest that advertisers of high involvement products should take particular care in selecting endorsers that are well-matched with their product.*

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### INTRODUCTION

As consumers are inundated with advertising, marketers attempting to reach them are faced with the increasingly challenging task of gaining their attention. Making communications directly relevant to targeted individuals is one means of breaking through this plethora of advertising. Clearly, this could be effectively accomplished if product advertising exposure could be timed to coincide with the consumer's need/want recognition. However, the fact that different individuals within a target market are likely to recognize needs and wants at different times, compounds the difficulty in anticipating the timing of need and want recognition. Advertisers are faced with the challenge of not just getting audience attention, but of making the communication meaningful, in the absence of being able to ascertain whether a need or want for the product offering has been recognized.

A widely applied method in advertising for gaining this "quality" attention from a target audience is the use of endorsements. Endorsements possess several

attributes which enhance their ability to gain and hold attention, so that product-related information can be effectively communicated. First, endorsements place the information in a "human" setting where the audience can receive information in a communication context which more closely approaches "natural" interaction (i.e., person-to-person). A second apparent advantage to endorsements is the ability to use a human source to highlight, or focus, the salient criteria to be associated with a product offering and contained in an advertisement. Finally, previous research (c.f. Pollay and Gallagher 1990) has suggested that individuals outwardly project or describe themselves to others through their selection and consumption of products. In such a situation, an endorsement provides a human context which consumers can choose to identify with, thereby making it easier for them to project the desired image.

Unfortunately, while bodies of research exist for endorsements in advertising (e.g., Agrawal and Kamakura 1995; Tripp, Jenson, and Carlson 1994, and Heath, McCarthy, and Mothersbaugh 1994) and consumer involvement (e.g., Goodstein 1993; MacInnis and Park 1991; Zaichkowsky 1994; James and Kover 1992), there is little empirical research that specifically addresses the issue of a connection between endorsements and target audience

involvement. The purpose of this study is to explore the use of endorsements in advertising to provide both new theoretical perspectives as well as practical implications designed to make endorsements more effective. First, the study will seek to enhance the understanding of the relationship between endorsements and involvement. Second, the study will utilize biographical sketches to create endorser schemas in the minds of the subjects prior to their viewing an advertisement to explore how advertisers can more effectively apply endorsements.

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENDORSEMENTS AND INVOLVEMENT

As suggested earlier, a number of studies have dealt with issues related to both endorsements in advertising and consumer involvement. According to McCracken (1989), much of the relevant previously published literature has been aimed at identifying characteristics associated with endorsements such as trustworthiness, expertise, likability, and similarity. One suggested perspective has been that an individual possessing an "ideal" endorser profile would serve as a successful communicator, regardless of the product offering in question. However, marketplace experience seems to suggest otherwise. For example, despite Bill Cosby's ineffectiveness as an endorser for the brokerage firm of E.F. Hutton (McCracken 1989), his 1994 Jell-O endorsement was rated as one of the year's most appealing (Goldman 1994). Seeking to explain such inconsistencies in endorser effectiveness, Kahle and Homer (1985) introduced the "match-up hypothesis," which holds that endorser effectiveness is contingent upon the degree to which the image of the product matches that of the endorser.

Involvement is another construct receiving considerable attention in advertising literature. The overarching proposition is that the more involved an individual consumer is when faced with an advertisement, the more he or she will actively attempt to determine how the ad relates to their own needs and wants. In explaining involvement, Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann (1986a) developed the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) which has been empirically supported in several studies (c.f. Petty and Cacioppo; 1980; 1981; 1986a; 1986b). The ELM holds that

under conditions of low involvement (where motivation and/or ability to process a message is low), individuals conserve cognitive resources and allow peripheral cues (such as endorser characteristics) to influence attitudes. In contrast, under conditions of high involvement (where motivation and ability to process the message are high) attitudes are influenced through a "central route." In such cases, individuals carefully consider the pros and cons of the message. Bitner and Obermiller (1984) contend that an awareness of the conditions under which specific cues are processed centrally or peripherally could enhance marketers' communication effectiveness. In the case of match-up, this would alert marketers to circumstances where the selection of a well-matched endorser should be a priority. This is crucial to the effective use of endorsements, considering the large dollar amounts invested in celebrity endorsements.

In terms of involvement, researchers have speculated that match-up may be centrally processed (Petty and Cacioppo 1980). This is true to the extent that the celebrity image contains information relevant to the product or message, and contains information over and above that contained in the explicit verbal arguments. For example, Sprint and Candice Bergen are well-matched on the attribute of feistiness and irreverence (Miller 1995). However, no study to date has provided compelling evidence that matchup involves central processing, because previous studies investigating match-up and involvement have focused exclusively on the physical attractiveness aspect of matchup, and physical attractiveness is an attribute that could serve as a peripheral cue as well as product relevant information (Kahle and Homer 1985). As will be discussed later, these studies have provided only post hoc support that match-up is centrally processed.

### Match-up

Researchers have argued that endorser effectiveness depends on the degree to which a congruence exists between the endorser and product images (Kahle and Homer 1985; Kamins 1990; McCracken 1989). This match-up can occur based on several dimensions. Some authors have focused on the physical

attractiveness aspect of match-up, arguing that in the case of a product identified by the target audience with attractiveness (i.e., one that enhances the user's physical attractiveness), there is a positive relationship between ad effectiveness and congruence of product and endorser image (Kahle and Homer 1985; Kamins 1990). Thus, this variation of the "match-up" hypothesis would predict that when the physical attractiveness of a celebrity "matches-up" with the presence and degree to which the advertised product enhances attractiveness, then product and advertisement evaluations should be positively impacted (Kamins 1990).

A number of studies in the physical attractiveness literature provide support for this match-up hypothesis (c.f. Kahle and Homer 1985). In terms of product relevance to attractiveness, (Kahle and Homer 1985) suggested that the main effect for physical attractiveness on attitudes and behavioral intention observed in their research was consistent with the predictions of the match-up hypothesis, since the advertisements used in their study were for razor blades, an attractiveness related product. Baker and Churchill's (1977) study experimentally manipulated product relevance to attractiveness. These researchers manipulated model attractiveness and type of product advertised (coffee versus perfume) and found a significant interaction between these two variables on behavioral intention, but found no such interaction on the cognitive and affective variables. However, as Kamins (1990) has noted, this study dealt with models (a passive representative) rather than endorsers (an active representative), suggesting that models may be more weakly linked to the advertised product than endorsers.

In an effort to more fully explore the phenomena, Kamins (1990) manipulated type of product and the physical attractiveness of the endorser. The findings indicated that, in the case of an attractiveness related product, use of an attractive celebrity had a significantly greater impact on measures of spokesperson credibility and attitude towards the ad than did the unattractive celebrity. On the other hand, in the case of the product unrelated to attractiveness, there was no significant difference between the attractive and unattractive celebrities on the various

dependent measures. It should be noted that the interaction observed by Kamins (1990) between spokesperson attractiveness and product was limited to the dependent measures of endorser credibility and attitude towards the ad.

Other researchers have conceptualized physical attractiveness as a multidimensional construct. For example, Solomon, Ashmore, and Longo (1992) distinguished between multiple types of physical attractiveness and concluded that particular types of physical attractiveness can be more effectively utilized when matched with certain product types.

Celebrities and products may also be matched on dimensions other than physical attractiveness. A means of accomplishing this is through endorser identification being matched to the main attribute that is being stressed in the message (e.g., speed, wholesomeness, toughness, etc). In such cases, endorser effectiveness may be enhanced to the degree that a linkage exists between salient endorser attributes and advertised product selling points. Misra and Betty (1990) conducted one of the few studies to date that looked at match-up from this perspective, and found a positive relationship between match-up and recall. In addition, a significant correlation between brand and endorser attitudes was also observed in highly matched conditions.

#### **Involvement and Match-up**

One study in particular provides support for the notion that match-up can be processed centrally as a product-relevant argument. Petty and Caccioppo (1980) exposed subjects to an advertisement for a new shampoo product that featured either two very attractive, or two very unattractive, well-known golf and tennis celebrity endorsers. The experiment yielded a main effect for attractiveness, rather than the hypothesized interaction between attractiveness and involvement (i.e., brand attitudes were affected by attractiveness to the same extent, regardless of involvement level). The authors reasoned that attractiveness must be serving as a peripheral cue under low involvement conditions, and as a product-relevant central argument under high involvement

conditions (i.e., the attractive endorsers served as a visual testimony to the shampoo's effectiveness). Like Petty and Caccioppo (1980), Kahle and Homer (1985) studied physical attractiveness and involvement. However, their study exposed subjects to ads featuring celebrity endorsements of a brand of razor blade. Interestingly, they also identified a main effect for physical attractiveness on attitudes towards the brand and the ad, but not an interaction between attractiveness and involvement.

Kahle and Homer (1985) claim to provide evidence that match-up may serve as part of the central message. However, it could be argued that instead of directly manipulating match-up, the authors manipulated physical attractiveness, likability, and involvement. In the study, existing celebrities endorsed a brand of razor blades, the only product in the experiment. As was the case with Petty and Caccioppo (1980), interactions were not observed between attractiveness and involvement. Instead, only a main effect was revealed for attractiveness. Unlike Petty and Caccioppo (1980), the authors utilize the theoretical framework of social adaptation theory, rather than the ELM. In both studies match-up took place on an attribute that could also be peripheral cue (e.g., physical attractiveness). In addition, neither study directly manipulated match-up, nor measured match-up for manipulation check purposes. Thus, there is no evidence that subjects actually perceived the physically attractive endorsers as being better matched with the product. Furthermore, the use of existing celebrities potentially confounds match-up with other variables such as likability and trustworthiness. The present study attempts to overcome some of the limitations of earlier studies by developing highly controlled endorser schemas of fictitious endorsers. Match-up will be manipulated without inadvertently varying other source characteristics. In addition, two fictitious products are used rather than one to provide a clearer manipulation of match-up.

### HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Considering the role of previously conducted studies, several possible directions exist for further studies. The phenomenon to be investigated in this study

involves the effect of endorsers' match with products under conditions of increasing involvement and the influence the endorsers exert on an advertisement's target audience. As the previous discussion indicates, endorsers perceived as being well-matched to the product they represent, and conveying product relevant information, should exert relatively high levels of influence, in the form of an argument for the product, on an advertisement's audience. Furthermore, as the consumer's involvement increases, so should the endorser's influence on the receiver, suggesting a direct relationship. Thus, the first hypothesis can be stated as follows:

H(1a): The influence of a well-matched endorser will increase as involvement increases.

Conversely, a poorly matched endorser lacking product-relevant information should be inversely related to influence, suggesting a corollary hypothesis:

H(1b): The influence of a poorly-matched endorser will decrease as involvement increases.

### METHODOLOGY

In empirically testing the hypotheses, an experimental design was employed. Prior to presenting the data analysis and resulting conclusions, it is first necessary to discuss the salient points related to the mechanics of the experiment conducted. These include: 1) the pretest, 2) the research design, 3) the experimental stimuli, 4) the biographical sketches used to incorporate the "matching" principle, 5) the dependent variables, and 6) the experimental procedure itself.

#### Pretest

The experiment required that two fictitious brands from the same product category be developed along with two corresponding fictitious endorsers. It also required that two advertisements be created. Thus, a pretest was undertaken to assist in the development of these stimuli. One of the major objectives of the pretest was the identification of two endorser descriptions that corresponded appropriately to two

brand descriptions. The goal was to match one of the brands with the first endorser, while simultaneously preventing a match with the second endorser.

Similarly, the second brand was created to match-up well with the second endorser, but not with the first.

A total of six different brand descriptions (two from each of three selected product categories - pain relievers, drink mixes, and fragrances) were created and pretested. In addition, six different endorser descriptions were also created and pretested, two from each product category. To assess any inadvertent manipulation of endorser characteristics other than match-up, seven-point semantic differential scales were used to assess subjects' source perceptions. Expertise, trustworthiness and physical attractiveness were measured using three different five-item scales borrowed from Ohanian (1990), all of which have been demonstrated to be valid and reliable in previously published research. Similarity was measured with a 2-item scale (similar to me/not similar to me, like me/not like me). The likability manipulation was checked with a 3-item scale - (likable/unlikable, pleasant/unpleasant, and friendly/unfriendly). Both of these scales exceeded the .7 Cronbach's alpha cut-off recommended by Nunnally (1978).

The match-up manipulation was measured with a seven-item Likert-based index. The subjects expressed their level of agreement with the following statements: 1) the image of product and endorser are well-matched; 2) the endorser and brand are logically related; 3) the endorser is appropriate for the brand being endorsed; 4) the endorser probably uses this brand of product in his everyday life; 5) the endorser possesses expertise relevant to this brand; 6) the endorser and brand possess many of the same intangible qualities; and 7) the use of this endorser allows brand benefits to be demonstrated.

The pretest consisted of three 2X2 factorial design experiments (one for each of the three specified product classes). In each case, the brands and endorsers served as the two independent variables. In a classroom setting, a total of 138 undergraduate marketing students participated in the pretest. Of

these, 72 served as subjects for the first two experiments, while the remaining 66 served as subjects for the third experiment. The 72 subjects were randomly assigned to one combination of pain reliever brand and endorser, and one combination of drink mix brand and endorser. The high-matched pain reliever manipulations included (endorser/brand): a track star/Fastactin and a weightlifter/Strongdose. The high matched drink mixes included: a fitness nut/high energy drink (Zip), and a "bar fly"/cocktail mix (Zap). Low match conditions were created by pairing the endorsers and products in the opposite manner. The remaining 66 subjects were randomly assigned to one fragrance brand and one endorser. The high match condition included: a "mountain man"/adventure cologne (Yukon), and a "country clubber"/sophisticated cologne (Pendleton). Again, low match was achieved through opposite pairings.

The absence of a significant interaction between pain reliever brands and their endorsers indicated that match-up had not been successfully manipulated. In contrast, match-up was successfully manipulated using the drink mixes. However, the "bar fly" drink mix endorser was perceived as significantly less trustworthy and possessing less expertise than the "fitness nut."

The fragrances resulted in an unconfounded matchup manipulation as indicated by the significant interaction ( $p < .05$ ) between endorsers and brands, and the lack of significant main effects or interactions on the other source variables. Subjects rated the matched conditions of Pendleton/Country Clubber (mean = 4.52) and Yukon/Mountain Man (mean = 4.71) as being significantly ( $p < .05$ ) better matched than the unmatched conditions of Pendleton/Mountain Man (mean = 2.68) and Yukon/Country Clubber (mean = 2.91).

### Research Design

The subjects were exposed to one of two brands (Pendleton versus Yukon), one of two endorsers (mountain man versus country clubber), and two levels of involvement (high versus low). The data was analyzed as a 2 X 2 factorial with the match-up

variable being operationalized based on the degree to which the brand of cologne and endorser description matched up. Those subjects exposed to the mountain man/Yukon or country clubber/Pendleton combinations were merged into the high match-up treatment condition. Those exposed to the mountain man/Pendleton or country clubber/Yukon combinations were placed in the low match-up treatment condition. Involvement was treated as a blocking variable as will be discussed in the results section.

### Experimental Stimuli

Two advertisements and two biographical sketches were created for the main experiment. One advertisement was created for Pendleton and one for Yukon. Both ads featured the same illustration of a man applying cologne to his face while gazing back at the reader through a mirror. In addition, each ad featured a smaller illustration inset at the lower left hand corner of the page. The inset in the Yukon ad featured a man hang gliding with mountain peaks in the background. In contrast, the Pendleton ad inset featured a tennis player returning a serve. Hang gliders and tennis players were used rather than mountain climbers and golfers in an effort to achieve a less obvious match than by presenting activities explicitly mentioned in biographical sketches. Although the endorsers were not described as being involved in hang gliding or tennis playing, these activities were expected to be perceived as fitting with schemas that the sketches intended to create. In each ad, the headline simply stated the brand name. A short subheading followed each headline: "The Essence of Sophistication" (Pendleton) and "Essence of Adventure" (Yukon). In addition, both ads featured the identical copy, "I have my own idea of what it takes to get to the top" Jim Knepp, Marketing Manager, Stockton, CA. Thus, the two advertisements were identical, with the exception of the activity depicted in the inset and the brand name and subheading. The drawings consisted of black and white pencil sketches.

### Biographical Sketches

The biographical sketches for the two endorsers, which were developed in the pretest, are presented

below. The embedded mountain man and country clubber manipulations are shown in parentheses in that order.

Jim Knepp is a relatively young middle level marketing manager for a large electronics corporation. He (*appreciates/enjoys getting away from*) the comforts of modern life. He (*dislikes/likes*) physically risky situations and is involved in (*leisure/adventure*) sports in his free time. He likes the (*peacefulness/adrenaline*) and (*relaxation/excitement*) associated with these sports and spends many of his weekends (*at the country club playing golf, polo, and other such sports/in the mountains rock climbing, white water rafting, and backpacking*). (*Golf/Mountain climbing*) is his favorite sport and the one at which he is most accomplished. Jim has (*consistently shown himself to be one of the best golfers at his club/climbed twelve of Colorado's fourteen-thousand foot peaks in the past three years*). He also spends about one weekend each month (*playing polo/white water rafting*), a sport he participates in primarily for the social interaction and opportunity it provides to be exposed to other (*leisure/adventure*) sports. A rafting buddy recently took Jim (*sailing/kayaking*), and he was so taken by the experience that he is presently considering buying a (*sailboat/kayak*).

The dependent variables to be considered in this analysis included: attitude towards the ad (Aad), attitude towards the brand (Abr), and behavioral intention (BI). Aad was assessed through an 8-item scale (7-point Likert statements), previously used by McKenzie and Lutz (1986), and Mowen and Brown (1981). Abr was measured with a 3-item scale also successfully applied by McKenzie and Lutz (1989), while BI was measured with a 2-item scale developed by Kahle and Homer (1990). Using the same scales employed in the pretest, potentially confounding source variables including physical attractiveness, similarity, likability, trustworthiness, and expertise of the endorsers were also measured. With the exception of likability, each were treated as covariates in the final experiment analysis. Finally, a 4-item scale was developed to measure subjects' involvement with the purchase of male cologne

(trivial/fundament, of concern to me/of no concern to me, irrelevant/relevant, unimportant/important).

### Procedure

The group used for the final experiment was comprised of consumers ( $n=127$ ) from a single midwestern city who had agreed to participate in a large-scale research project, of which this study was one. None of these participants were students who had participated in the pretest. The questionnaires were completed in small groups. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of four possible booklets, which differed in terms of the biographical description ("mountain man" versus "country clubber") and product advertised (Pendleton versus Yukon). The cover page asked subjects to first read the endorser's biographical description and then read the advertisement on the following page. In order to assure that impressions were memory based, subjects were instructed not to refer back to the advertisement and endorser description while answering the questionnaire. Upon completion of the treatment exposures, the subjects were instructed to indicate their attitude toward the ad (Aad), attitude toward the brand (Abr), and behavioral intentions (BI). Match-up was measured for manipulation check purposes on the next page, as well as covariate measures including perceived physical attractiveness, likability, expertise, similarity, and trustworthiness of the endorser. Additionally, measures of subjects' level of involvement with the decision to purchase a male cologne were taken. Finally, each participant was asked to indicate their gender.

### DATA ANALYSIS

In the first stage of the analysis, the reliability of the subscales used for measuring the dependent variables and the covariates were assessed using Cronbach's alpha (Nunnally 1978). The coefficient alpha for the three subscales measuring Aad, Abr, and BI was equal to .67, .98, and .96 respectively. The alphas for subscales measuring the covariates physical attractiveness, likability, trustworthiness, expertise, and involvement were equal to .96, .99, .79, and .40 respectively. Thus, with the exception of the involvement scale, the measures of reliability were

within the .7 range (Nunnally 1978). Means were computed for multiple item subscales, in an effort to indicate the mean score averaged across items thereby allowing for standardization of the means from each subscore.

### Manipulation Checks

Measures were taken to determine the extent to which the match-up manipulation was effective. As previously discussed, the eight-item match-up scale was used to measure the degree to which subjects perceived endorser and brand as being matched. A t-test revealed that the highly matched endorsers (mean=4.26) were found to be significantly ( $t=2.71$ ;  $p<.00$ ) better matched, than the low match-up manipulation (mean=3.31). While the two endorsers did not differ significantly in terms of likability, similarity, physical attractiveness, and trustworthiness, the t-test revealed that relative to the country clubber, the mountain man possessed significantly greater levels of expertise ( $p<.05$ ) and was perceived as being better matched ( $p<.01$ ), when averaged across all treatments.

There was some concern that the highly matched endorsers might be rated as being more likable, expert, similar, trustworthy, and physically attractive than the low match endorsers. However, t-tests revealed that there was no significant difference in endorser ratings on any of these variables ( $p<.05$ ). In summary, the analysis suggests that match-up was successfully manipulated in the main experiment.

### Hypotheses Testing

Involvement was treated as a blocking variable in the analysis. Because of a low coefficient alpha (.40), two items were dropped from the four-item involvement scale. The remaining two items (unimportant/important) and (irrelevant/relevant) were used based on an item-to-item correlation of .82 (Saxe and Weitz 1982) to indicate each subject's involvement level. Those subjects rating their involvement level as seven (scores ranged from 2 to 7) or less were put into the high involvement group (mean = 5.34) with lower numbers indicating higher levels of involvement. Subjects rating their

involvement level as eight or greater were put into the low involvement group (mean = 10.40). This method yielded two groups of approximately equal size. Sixty-three subjects were included in the high involvement group and sixty-four in the low involvement group. An ANCOVA was run, with similarity, trustworthiness, physical attractiveness, and expertise treated as covariates.

In support of Hypothesis (1a), a significant interaction between match-up and involvement was revealed ( $p = .01$ ) for Abr. These results are shown in Table 1. In further support for H(1a), the findings also showed that high match/high involvement subjects rated the brands higher (mean=4.17) than did the high match/low involvement subjects (mean=3.29).

**TABLE 1**  
ANCOVA - Attitude Toward the Brand  
Match-up and Involvement

| Variable*            | df | Type III SS | F-Value | P-Value |
|----------------------|----|-------------|---------|---------|
| Match-up             | 1  | 2.00        | .20     | .65     |
| Involvement          | 1  | 15.55       | 1.75    | .19     |
| Match/Involvement    | 1  | 58.83       | 6.56    | .01     |
| Trustworthiness*     | 1  | 1.46        | .27     | .69     |
| Similarity*          | 1  | 38.35       | 4.27    | .04     |
| Physical Attractive* | 1  | 41.27       | 4.59    | .04     |
| Expertise*           | 1  | 31.32       | 3.49    | .06     |
| Likability*          | 1  | 1.82        | 1.72    | .78     |

\* Covariate

The results failed to support the Hypothesis (1b), which predicted that the influence of low matched endorsers would decrease as involvement increased. There was little difference between the brand ratings given by the low match/high involvement (mean = 3.70) and low match/low involvement subjects (mean = 3.61). Finally, no other significant main effects or interactions were revealed on either of the dependent variables BI or Aad (see Table 2 and 3).

**TABLE 2**  
ANCOVA - Attitude Toward Ad  
Match-up and Involvement

| Variable*            | df | Type III SS | F-Value | P-Value |
|----------------------|----|-------------|---------|---------|
| Match-up             | 1  | 23.58       | .55     | .45     |
| Involvement          | 1  | 29.75       | .69     | .40     |
| Match/Involvement    | 1  | 58.48       | 1.37    | .24     |
| Trustworthiness*     | 1  | 23.59       | .55     | .45     |
| Similarity*          | 1  | 302.59      | 7.07    | .00     |
| Physical Attractive* | 1  | 179.65      | 4.20    | .04     |
| Expertise*           | 1  | 150.85      | 3.52    | .06     |
| Likability*          | 1  | 23.46       | .55     | .45     |

\* Covariate

**TABLE 3**  
ANCOVA - Behavioral Intentions  
Match-up and Involvement

| Variable*            | df | Type III SS | F-Value | P-Value |
|----------------------|----|-------------|---------|---------|
| Match-up             | 1  | .69         | .13     | .72     |
| Involvement          | 1  | 6.67        | 1.22    | .27     |
| Match/Involvement    | 1  | 8.42        | 1.54    | .21     |
| Trustworthiness*     | 1  | 30.53       | 5.59    | .01     |
| Similarity*          | 1  | 13.40       | 2.45    | .11     |
| Physical Attractive* | 1  | 3.47        | .64     | .42     |
| Expertise*           | 1  | 2.85        | .52     | .47     |
| Likability*          | 1  | 18.68       | 3.42    | .06     |

\* Covariate

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings in this study suggest some important implications of the successful use of endorsers in advertisements. In the case of brand attitudes the results indicated that the importance of match-up increases with increasing levels of involvement. However, the findings also showed that involvement had little effect on the impact of the poorly matched endorsers. As for the other persuasion measures of BI and Aad, no significant relationships were identified.

Perhaps one of the most important managerial implications of this study is that it calls attention to the need to consider both the characteristics of the product offering, as well as the desired objective, prior to utilizing an endorser as a fundamental component of any advertising effort. In the case of a product offering which could be considered to be reasonably low involvement, the use of an endorser may have little or no positive impact. Under conditions of low involvement, this research found no significant relationship between well-matched endorsers and Aad, Abr, and BI. Given these findings, it may be advisable for advertisers of low involvement products to focus their marketing communications directly on the given product offering rather than attempting to develop a relevant, but indirect, linkage between the target audience and the product through an endorser.

A second important implication of this study relates to the identification of advertising objectives. This study indicates that, while endorsers are more effective in high involvement consumer buying situations, increased effectiveness is not universal across all advertising objectives. One of the interesting findings contained here is that, even under high involvement conditions, well-matched endorsers do not significantly influence attitude toward the advertisement itself. Thus, in new product introductions, or in situations where the ad itself forms an important component of the product identification, the use of endorsers may be of questionable effectiveness. Additionally, when the objective is to directly influence the behavioral intentions (e.g., product purchase) of the target audience, endorsements may not be the ideal approach. However, in a highly competitive setting where influencing attitude toward a specific brand is paramount, well-matched endorsers appear to be a good choice as a foundation for effective advertisements.

### Limitations of Study

At this juncture, it is important to note some of the limitations of this study. First, students were used in the design, potentially limiting external validity. However, as consumers, students are often the target of advertisements using paid endorsers. Moreover,

students are frequently targeted by fragrance companies (e.g., Calvin Klein). Thus, many students have experience purchasing fragrances and being exposed to celebrity endorsement advertisements. Therefore, most students serving as subjects in the present study were put into a situation with which they could easily relate. Additionally, Calder, Phillips, and Tybout (1981) argued that sample homogeneity actually permits a stronger theory test by enhancing internal validity.

Another limitation concerned the experimental methodology's employment of a forced exposure situation, where attention was more or less guaranteed. Also contributing to the artificiality of the study was that fact that subjects were exposed to unfinished advertisements that did not appear in an actual magazine format. The generalizability of the study may also be limited in that it involved only print advertisements for male fragrances. Furthermore, only "typical" consumer endorsers were used, thus limiting the ability to generalize to the realm of celebrity, expert, and C.E.O. endorsers.

These limitations notwithstanding, the primary managerial implication to emerge from this study is that the findings imply that marketers should take care to insure that their endorsers are appropriately matched with their products, especially when their messages will be received by a highly involved group of consumers. Contrary to previous research, the results here are consistent with the notion that match-up can serve as part of the central message. The main effects for physical attractiveness found in the earlier studies (e.g., Kahle and Homer 1985) were used as support for the idea that match-up was part of the central message, since these studies used a peripheral cue (physical attractiveness) as a proxy for match-up. The present study manipulated match-up in a manner that was not confounded with peripheral cues such as physical attractiveness. Thus, in contrast to earlier studies, support for the idea that match-up is part of the central message is provided by the significant interaction shown between involvement and match-up, rather than by a main effect on a potentially peripheral cue such as attractiveness. While other studies (e.g., Kamins 1990 and Buhr 1987) had suggested that match-up

may enhance the way an endorser is perceived, the present study showed that there were no significant differences between the ratings given to the high match-up and low match-up endorsers in terms of expertise, trustworthiness, similarity, likability, and physical attractiveness.

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