Endorsement by celebrities: the role of congruence

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Current research work seeks to provide an overall view of the effectiveness of the strategy of endorsement by celebrities. For this purpose, we propose to investigate the effects of perceived congruence (celebrity/brand) on attitudes toward the brand, while retaining a two-dimensional structure of congruence (pertinence and expectancy). A pairing (brand/celebrity) is said to be congruent if it is pertinent and expected, and incongruent if it is neither pertinent nor expected. Our empirical study is based on the choice of four celebrities having varying degrees of congruence with the brand. The impact of congruence is strongest when congruence is moderate (a pertinent but unexpected pair).

Keywords: Endorsement, Congruence, Pertinent pairing, Expected pairing, Attitude toward the brand.

INTRODUCTION

Advertising “is tightly linked to its environment and to the society in which it evolves. That’s why, it should integrate the state of mind, the fashions, and more globally, the socio-economic dimension. Thus, it is essential to take these factors into consideration when analyzing the mutations of advertising. Today, three major phenomena have become imperative: the increasing saturation of the markets in which the brands are set, the congestion of the media advertising landscape, and finally, the consumer’s maturity when it comes to advertising, and more generally toward brands. For brands to emerge and distinguish themselves, it is essential that they create an emotional appeal beyond the rational preference.” (Samama, 2003, p. 74). Nowadays, endorsement by celebrities has become an integral part of marketing communication strategies (Erdogan, 1999 cited by Jaoued and Chandon, 2007, p. 3). This alliance between brands and stars has become a major communication technique. It is not a new phenomenon. However, its acceleration during the last two decades (Fleck et al, 2006 p. 3) is a proof of its efficiency (Gail et al, 1992 p. 45). Indeed, all over the world, advertisers do not hesitate to sign sky-high contracts with well-known and beloved people such as actors, singers, athletes, top models, or politicians, in order to promote their products. Stars have now acquired a predominant place in our daily life. There is no magazine or TV channel where we will not find the latest news of our favorite celebrities. Besides, there are several reasons to believe that stars are influential and that their use in advertising often generates positive reactions among consumers (Jaoued and Chandon, 2007, p. 3). They enable the favors of targeted consumers to be captured, and also retain their attention and win their attachment to the brands promoted. According to Spry, Pappu and Cornwall (2011, p.882) one-in-four advertisements use celebrity endorsement (MarketWatch, 2006). It influences advertising effectiveness, brand recognition, brand recall, purchase intentions and even purchase behaviour. Till et al., (2008) demonstrated that celebrity endorsement leads to a favourable attitude toward the endorsed brand.

A review of the literature shows that most studies have dealt with questions such as the impact of the lure and credibility of fame on the attitude toward advertising, the brand, or the purchase intention (Kamins, 1990; Till and Busler, 1998). These studies have all confirmed the positive effects of the reliance on attractive, credible celebrities, despite the fact that credibility and attractiveness are not the only factors that guarantee effective endorsement. The risk of failure still exists,
because stars are not efficient in all conditions, for example the star may not match the brand. There has always been a lack of consensus about the findings. For these reasons the debate over the efficiency of endorsement is far from being over. Our main objective here is to investigate the effect of congruence between the star and the brand on attitudes toward the brand. Interestingly, only a few studies have dealt with the effect of congruence - and especially its two dimensions - on advertising efficiency. We have adopted the two-dimensional structure of congruence (expectedness and pertinence) defined by Heckler and Childers (1992), in order to study more precisely the effect of these two dimensions on attitude toward the brand. This leads to our central research objective, expressed in the following questions: What is the effect of congruence between the star and the brand on attitudes toward this brand? What is the effect of the dimensions of pertinence and of expectedness of the pairing on attitudes toward the brand? Is moderate congruence more efficient in terms of attitude than high or low congruence? What are the moderating effects of the attitude prior to exposure, and of familiarity with the brand and involvement with the product?

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

The importance of relying on celebrities in advertising

Many consumers “are fascinated by celebrities. There is something magical and alluring about stars and rich people, about those who enjoy great success, those who are famous, or at least well-known. They are admired and people even adopt their behavior, opinions and attitudes.” (Chebat et al, 2003, p. 328).

The benefits of using a celebrity in an advertisement and its influence on the consumer’s perceptual process

According to the Agora encyclopedia, "fame is measured by the newspaper clippings and the broadcasting time devoted to a person. In this respect, it is different from glory, which is the result of the exceptional works of a person or the exemplary life of this person. There is no doubt that a famous person could equally be worthy of glory, that was the case of Lindberg, but this is often fortuitous. More than merit, it is the fuss made about an act or a person that makes fame." According to McCracken (1989, p. 310), a celebrity who is the spokesperson of a brand is defined as “any individual known by the public who uses this recognition to promote a product through appearing with it in an advertisement”. According to Yang, Lo and Wang (2012, p. 89), “celebrity endorsers share the well-known characteristics of recognition, style, attractiveness, and popularity, and each celebrity embodies his or her own unique image characteristics into the brand” (McCracken, 1989; Kamins, 1990; Ohanian, 1990).

Benefits

The benefits drawn from using stars in advertising are legion. In fact, the messages transmitted by these spokespersons are more influential than those transmitted by anonymous people, for several reasons. On the one hand, stars draw more attention to advertisements in which they appear and to brands which they promote (Atkin and Block, 1983 cited by Jaoued, 2006, p. 4). On the other hand, celebrity endorsements can help to highlight the advertisements in which they are presented and to overcome the advertising congestion that surrounds them (Miciak and Shanklin, 1994). Besides, stars help to break cultural barriers in communication, thanks to their popularity and worldwide recognition (Erdoğan 1999; Kaikati 1987 cited by Jaoued, 2006, p. 4). Celebrities are also used to promote the image of a new product or change the image of a product that is already on the market. Céline Dion, for example, has for years acted as the spokeswoman of the Quebec Association for Cystic Fibrosis, and the Saint Justine children’s hospital foundation in Montreal. The Quebec Ministry of Tourism used the services of Céline Dion in a major advertising campaign in the winter of 2002 in the USA. The campaign was conducted to thwart the negative effects of the events of September 11th, 2001. The ministry was counting on the fame and credibility of Céline Dion. It is still common to rely on celebrities to alter certain perceptions or to encourage a given behavior. For instance, offering one’s father flowers for Fathers’ Day still seems somewhat strange for many North Americans. In order to change the view, associated with flowers, that “presents are for women only”, an advertising campaign was launched by the World Florists’ Network, for which Merlin Olsen, a former player for the Los Angeles Rams weighing more than 250 pounds, was chosen as a spokesman to show that real men can be given flowers (Chebat, Filiatrault, and Laroche, 2003, p. 329). We also cite the example of Head and Shoulders which, since its re-launching in 1985, has communicated through a double-copy system: an “efficiency” copy, generally involving a hairdresser who praises the product’s efficiency, and a “celebrity” copy which emphasizes a cosmetic quality while breaking the taboo surrounding dandruff: “even stars have dandruff” (Samma, 2003, p. 83).
Table 1. Models explaining endorsement by celebrities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODELS</th>
<th>AUTHORS</th>
<th>DESCRIPTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source credibility model</td>
<td>Hovland (1951)</td>
<td>The message efficiency depends on the source’s skill and loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelman model</td>
<td>Kelman (1961)</td>
<td>This model explains the influence mechanisms of celebrities on consumer behavior, according to the following three processes of social influence: internalization, identification, and conformity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source attractiveness model</td>
<td>McGuire (1968)</td>
<td>Similarity, familiarity, and sympathy with the endorsing person are the determining features of the message’s efficiency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense transfer model</td>
<td>McCracken (1989)</td>
<td>This model describes the whole process. A celebrity is not efficient only because of certain aspects of credibility or seduction, but also thanks to the cultural and social significations which are associated with him/her. This model shows how to transfer the celebrity’s significations to the product/brand, and from the product/brand to the consumer. This endorsement process depends on the symbolic qualities of the celebrity, such as status, social class, gender, age, personality, values, lifestyle, etc.</td>
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The influence of celebrities on the consumer’s perceptual process

The perceptual mechanism organizes the relationships between individuals and the world around them (Darpy and Volle 2003, p. 44). These two authors have also shown that not all the stimuli addressed to the consumer, which are beyond absolute thresholds and are likely to create a reaction, can be received. Indeed, some 300 to 600 advertising messages targeting consumers are broadcast every day. Perception also relies on the individual’s capacity to focus on certain stimuli. Only 30 to 80 messages a day are effectively perceived, and fewer than ten messages are likely to have an impact. In order to handle this information overload, the individual uses up to seven adaptation mechanisms, especially selectivity, which leads us to ignore certain stimuli while favoring some others (ibid. P. 49).

In fact, perception has been defined as “the process through which a consumer becomes aware of his marketing environment so as to have it in keeping with his referencing scheme. Apart from being selective, perception is cumulative, in that the consumer organizes isolated perceptions into a global whole.” (Décaudin, 1995, p. 31). Celebrities are multidimensional by nature and are perceived by the target as having distinct characteristics, which consequently affect the persuasiveness of the messages delivered (O’Mahony and Meenaghan, 1998, p. 15), and can also stimulate the consumer’s perceptual process. Table 1.

The effect of congruence on the efficiency of endorsement

Congruence has been a matter of investigation in many areas of research, notably sponsorship, brand extension, co-branding, and endorsement. Several terms are used, such as congruence, fit, link, or match-up effect. “In the field of celebrity spokespersons, has very little congruence was defined as such by Misra and Beatty (1990). According to them, it is “that features very relevant spokespersons are consistent with the highly relevant attributes of the brand.” Many authors have studied specific aspects of fame, such as its type, skin color (Huston et al., 2003) or physical attractiveness (Kamins, 1990), but few have addressed the congruence more broadly”. Fleck-Dousteyssier et al., (2005, p.8).

Defining congruence

According to Misra and Beatty (1990, p. 161) congruence occurs when “the deeply pertinent features of the spokeswoman and the deeply pertinent attributes of the brand cohere.” Fleck et al (2006, p. 11) have emphasized the effect of congruence between celebrity and brand on the brand’s image, relying on the two-dimensional structure initially cited by Heckler and Childers (1992). They have defined it as follows:

- The brand/celebrity pairing is expected if it corresponds to a predetermined scheme on the brand.
- The brand/celebrity pairing is pertinent if it makes sense and contributes to a clear communication of the brand’s message.
The effect of congruence on memorization

Three social cognition models were discussed by Misra and Beatty (1990, pp. 162-163), i.e.:

- The filtering model: when individuals receive a piece of information that is not congruent with the celebrity's personality, they will reject the celebrity. But celebrities who are congruent will be memorized instantly and even remembered later.
- The associative network model: this postulates that a piece of information that is not pertinent is better remembered than one that is congruent. This can be measured immediately and also later on.
- Schema-pointer + Tag model: This model proposes that a piece of information that is not congruent is better memorized than a congruent one, if the memorization rate is measured instantly. Otherwise, if this rate is measured some days later, it is the congruent piece of information that will be memorized.

The two authors cited above have reached the conclusion that the memorization rate of an advertisement increases when the celebrity and the brand are united. Such a finding converges with the filtering model. The attitude toward the brand is improved, and the transfer of emotion from the star to the brand is easier. In addition, Heckler and Childers (1992, p. 476) combined visual and verbal information in printed advertisements to explore the impact of congruence on the communication process. They found that the memorization rate for the elements contained in an advertisement varies according to the congruence of the information (congruent/non congruent). A piece of unexpected information gets a higher memorization rate than one that is expected. However, if it is not pertinent, it produces a lower memorization rate than the one that is pertinent.

The effect of congruence on the brand’s image

Lynch and Schuler (1994) support the hypothesis stating that the message transmitted by the celebrity and the one transmitted by the brand must be congruent to insure a stronger persuasion. Moreover, Hsu and McDonald (2002, p. 26) stipulate that the characteristics of a product or a brand, together with the personality and the life-style of a celebrity, could be important assets in determining congruence between the star and the brand endorsed. Jaoued and Chandon (2007, p. 18) have shown that advertisements using celebrities who are perceived as credible and congruent with the brand generate more positive reactions than do other types of advertisements. Consequently, for an advertising campaign to be effective, the ambassador must be popular and have a clear image that is consistent with the product. Several promotional strategies using stars have failed owing to a hasty choice. Certain people in the field of marketing believe that it is enough that a person is famous for the product to be praised efficiently (Solomon, 2005, p. 241).

Brand image is defined as a set of perceptions about the brand as reflected in the set of associations with the brand (Keller 1993). This approach is consistent with the concept of memory as a network of associations (Anderson 1983). If an individual congruence is too low, a cognitive point of view, there is little similarity or logical connection between celebrity and brand and it is difficult to make sense of this association, to develop new inferences about the brand. If the congruence is too strong, the association may become too obvious and not encourage the exposed individual to seek more sense of it. In contrast, a moderate level of congruence can call the exposed individual and encourage them to elaborate on the meaning of the association, while allowing him to find meaning without too much difficulty.

The effect of congruence on attitude toward the brand

Several research works have found that the celebrity’s competence and physical attractiveness are two important factors in congruence. Kahle and Homer (1985), for instance, have examined the impact of a star’s physical attractiveness on the consumer’s attitude and purchase intention. They found that for products related to physical beauty, an attractive celebrity increases the credibility of the endorsing person and the attitude toward the advertisement (Kahle and Homer, cited by Lynch and Schuler, 1994, p. 422). Moreover, Brian and his collaborators (2000) conducted two studies. The first dealt with the role of the source’s attractiveness as a factor in congruence, and its impacts both on the attitude toward the brand and on the purchase intention. The results showed that there is a general effect of physical attractiveness on attitude toward the brand. The second study also investigated the endorsing person’s competence as a factor in congruence. It was found that using celebrities to represent a product that is congruent with their competence creates a more favorable attitude than when the product is incompatible. They also confirmed that a celebrity’s competence is a better factor for congruence than physical attractiveness.

O’Mahony and Tony (1998) studied the impact of endorsement by celebrities on the consumer’s behavior. The objectives of this study are the following:

- Determining the consumer’s attitudes toward endorsement
- Defining the impact of the image of various stars on the purchase intention
- Analyzing congruence between several celebrities and several products of a different type.

The research findings showed that consumers have favorable attitudes toward endorsement. Loyalty, sympathy, attractiveness, and the personality of a
celebrity are features which have no significant impact on the purchase intention. Yet these features can play an important role in drawing attention toward the brand’s endorsement, and in supporting the advertisement’s success. A favorable perception of a celebrity does not necessarily lead to the purchase of the product endorsed. The chosen celebrities must be credible in the eyes of the audience. They must be perceived as knowing the product well. The celebrity’s image must also be congruent with the product’s image.

However, Kamins and Gupta (1994) have studied the link or congruence between the type of endorsing person (whether a celebrity or an anonymous person) and the product promoted, relying on Kelman’s model (1961). They varied the type of spokesperson (famous/unknown) and the degree of congruence (high/low). They found that a high degree of congruence creates belief and strong attractiveness toward the endorsing celebrity, and a more favorable attitude toward the product. Besides, the efficiency of endorsement can be deeply influenced by the consumers’ inferences about the endorsing person. In other words, if consumers perceive that the ambassador really loves the endorsed product, their attitudes will be more favorable toward this product. Advertisers should make more efforts in their choice of celebrities, making sure that the celebrity’s image is consistent with the brand’s image, but they should also choose solid arguments and credible explanations to explain why the endorsing person actually loves the product (Silvera and Austed, 2004, p. 1509).

Accordingly, we make the following hypothesis:

H1: A high degree of congruence between celebrity and brand has a positive influence on attitude toward the brand.

The effect of the pertinence of the brand/celebrity pairing

The pertinence of the brand/celebrity pairing suggests that during an intensive treatment, the individual who is exposed to a message will be able to analyze the pairing without much difficulty and find a meaning in it (Fleck et al, 2006, p. 21). The individual can then elaborate on this, creating new associations for the brand, or reinforcing existing ones, which make up the brand’s image (Keller, 1993). In the field of sponsorship, Fleck (2004) has shown that when a sponsor/sponsored entity pairing is perceived as pertinent, the sponsor’s brand image is improved. Fleck (2006) has shown that a pertinent pairing generates more and stronger associations, a higher brand capital, and more favorable emotional reactions than a less pertinent pairing. More precisely, it generates a more favorable attitude toward the brand, a stronger attachment, and a greater confidence. In contrast a pairing that is not pertinent runs the risk of producing a negative impact on the brand’s perception and an impairment of the pre-exposure capital. Besides, the more a celebrity/brand is perceived as congruent or pertinent, the more positive is the response to the advertisement, in terms of attitude or purchase intention (Lynch and Schuler, 1994; Misra and Beatty, 1990). We therefore propose that:

H2: The more the brand/celebrity is perceived as pertinent, the better the attitude toward the brand

The effect of the expected nature of the brand/celebrity pairing

A brand/celebrity pairing is expected if it corresponds to a scheme that is predetermined on the brand (Fleck et al, 2006, p. 11). In his study of the effect of sponsorship on the consumer’s cognitive and emotional reactions, Fleck has shown that when the pairing is somewhat unexpected, results in terms of the associations’ strength and valence, brand capital, and emotional reactions evolve less favorably than when the pairing is expected. On the other hand, this somewhat-unexpected pairing generates more associations with the brand. Fleck et al. (2006, p. 21) suggest that the unexpected, surprising nature of the brand/celebrity pairing may stimulate attention and curiosity in exposed individuals, and allow them to process the message in a more intensive way. Expectedness will thus have a negative impact on the individual’s motivation to process this message, which will eventually generate a weaker effect on the perceived brand’s image. Therefore, we propose that:

H3: The more the brand/celebrity pairing is perceived as expected, the less the attitude toward the brand is improved

The effect of a moderate congruence

A relatively weak fit between the sponsor and the entity can be stimulating and incite individuals to engage in a more intensive processing of this information (Fleck et al, 2005). In the field of brand extension, Boush and Loken (1991) have shown that moderately typical extensions are evaluated in a more intensive way than typical or atypical ones. A moderate congruence between a scheme and an object benefits more from a positive evaluation than from either a strong congruence or a weak one (Meyers and Tybout, 1989; Jarge et al, 2001). Fleck (2006, p. 104) has examined the effect of sponsorship on cognitive and emotional reactions toward the brand. He found that this effect is stronger for an average degree of congruence (pertinent and unexpected pairing) than for a high degree of congruence (pertinent and expected), or for a low degree of congruence (non-
pertinent and unexpected). Similarly, in another study he advanced the hypothesis of a curvilinear relationship between the brand/celebrity congruence and the brand’s image: The impact on the brand’s image of an advertisement featuring a celebrity will be stronger in the case of moderate incongruity between brand and celebrity, the pairing being pertinent and unexpected, than in the case of high congruence (pertinent and expected pairing) or low congruence (non-pertinent and unexpected pairing). We thus propose:

\[ H4: \text{A moderate degree of congruence (pertinent and unexpected pairing) produces a stronger effect on the attitude toward the brand than does low congruence (non-pertinent and unexpected pairing) or high congruence (pertinent and expected pairing).} \]

The moderating effect of an attitude prior to exposure

A positive attitude toward the brand can lead to positive reactions toward the advertisement and any of the brand’s other communication channels (MacKenzie et al, 1986 cited by Jaoued and Chandon 2007, p. 12). Moreover, Jaoued and Chandon (2007) have proposed that the celebrity’s characteristics (credibility, congruence with the brand) will have less impact on the reactions of individuals having positive predispositions toward the brand. Results have shown that the influence of the celebrity/brand congruence on the brand’s image is significant only for consumers having a previously unfavorable attitude. We can therefore suggest the following hypothesis:

\[ H5: \text{The attitude toward the brand prior to exposure has a moderating effect on the relationship between congruence and attitude toward the brand after exposure.} \]

The moderating effect of familiarity

Kirmani and Shiv (1998, p. 45) have stressed the effects of congruence between celebrity and brand on the endorsement process. They showed that congruence can have a significant effect on attitude toward the brand when stimuli (celebrities) are highly familiar and deeply adored. We can then propose that:

\[ H6: \text{Familiarity with the brand has a moderating effect on the relationship between congruence and attitude toward the brand.} \]

The moderating effect of involvement

Involvement is a state of quick-wittedness (mental alertness) that has an impact on the granting of cognitive resources to a consumption object, a decision, or an action (Park and Mittal, 1985 quoted by Matthew et al, 2005). Mittal and Lee (1989) conceive involvement in the product as being the consumer’s interest in a given category of products. Certain empirical research works indicate that the consumers’ involvement in the product’s category significantly affects the evaluation of the advertisement (Muehling, Laczniak, and Andrews, 1993). In particular, it has been demonstrated that a deep involvement leads to greater attention and a better understanding of the advertising message (Celci and Olson, 1988). Shafer and Keillor (1997 quoted by Meziou 2008 p. 12) suggest that a deep involvement creates a more favorable attitude toward the brand when the consumer perceives congruence between the brand and the endorsing person. We can predict that involvement in the product moderates the impact of congruence on the attitude of the consumer toward the brand, hence the following hypothesis:

\[ H7: \text{Involvement in the product has a moderating effect on the correlation between congruence and attitude toward the brand.} \]

Presentation of the overall model and synthesis of hypotheses

Our general model comprises a variable to be explained (attitude toward the brand), an explanatory variable (congruence of the brand/celebrity pairing), and three moderating variables (attitude toward the brand prior to exposure, familiarity, and involvement). Figure 1

Following a literature review, we were able to better define the notion of congruence, as well as its effects on memorization, on the image, and on attitude toward the brand. We could also identify other variables which are likely to influence attitude toward the brand by playing a moderating role. Familiarity, involvement, and previous attitude toward the brand are among such variables. We have retained a two-dimensional structure of congruence (pertinence and expectedness) in order to detect their effect on a change in attitude.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Our empirical process involved two distinct steps: First, we had to create four advertising posters. Each of these posters featured a single celebrity and all four featured the same brand. We then designed a questionnaire to gather the data needed to verify certain hypotheses. The details of the conduct of these two steps are presented below. We chose four Tunisian celebrities from different fields, whom we found sufficiently different in terms of congruence with the brand. These are Hend CHAOUCH,
Ismail YOUMBAI, Sofiane Chaari, and Sami ELFEHRI (1). We opted for a single brand so as to optimize the study's internal validity. We made a short description of each celebrity, which we inserted on the corresponding poster, and we selected Toyota as the brand. The objective was to find a brand operating in a product category (Fleck et al, 2006): (1) for which endorsement by celebrities was common, (2) for which different levels of attitudes and images seemed to exist and to be expected, (3) for which personalities having different degrees of congruence could be found, (4) and which addressed men as well as women. Table 2.

### Sampling

Subjects in this study were selected by convenience sampling. This technique offers the advantage of being simple and practical to use, since it consists of interrogating the first person encountered who agrees to answer and who is capable of providing information on the topic. Two hundred male and female subjects, obtained via intercept at sidewalk café and in several residences participated in this study.

### Experiment

In this study, there are four versions of advertisements. In this case the experiment is the appropriate method (Fleck-Dousteyssier, (2003); Fleck-Dousteyssier et al, 2005; Heckler and Childers, 1992 and Speed and Thompson, 2005). The experiment took place in two cities: Bizerte and Tunis (Tunisia). Before being exposed to the ad, each person had to answer the first three questions. Then They were instructed to view the ad and then answer all the questions. Each ad was similar in arrangement, and contained a picture of a product ; Each ad also contained a picture of an endorser, the endorser’s name and a description of his expertise (Fleck-Dousteyssier et al, 2006; Siemens et al. (2008); Heckler and Childers (1992) and Speed and Thompson (2005). (see annexes)

### METHODS AND TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION

#### Congruence measurement

We adopted the scale developed by Fleck-Dousteyssier et al, (2006, p. 12). This scale was first developed by Fleck-Dousteyssier et al, (2005) to analyze a sponsored brand/entity pairing, and was in turn based on the works of Heckler and Childers (1992) and those of Speed and Thompson (2005).

#### Measurement of attitude toward the brand

To measure attitude toward the brand we have used the
scale of Dotson and Hyatt (2000), which consists of the following seven items:
With defects/Without defects; Convincing /Unconvincing; I believe in it/I don’t believe in it; Favorable /Unfavorable; Good/Mediocre; Good quality/Poor quality; Pleasant/Unpleasant. These items were measured on a seven-point differential semantic scale.

Measurement of involvement

Strazzieri and Hajdukowicz-Brisson (1995) distinguish “stake involvement” and “appeal involvement”. The scale derived from this definition, the PIA (Pertinence, Interest, Appeal) scale, comprises the following items:

- Pertinence 1: It's a product that counts a lot for me
- Pertinence 2: It's a product to which I give particular importance
- Interest 1: I particularly like talking about this product
- Interest 2: It can be said that this is a product that interests me
- Appeal 1: I feel particularly attracted to this product
- Appeal 2: Just the fact of asking for information on buying this product is a pleasure

We opted for the PIA scale because it allows us to quickly assess the involvement level of the persons interviewed. The psychometric qualities of the scale have been verified in many studies (Strazzieri and Hajdukowicz-Brisson, 1995; Le Roux, Chandon, and Strazzieri, 1996).

Measurement of the degree of familiarity with the brand

Familiarity with the brand is a continuous variable which reflects the direct and indirect level of experience of the consumers with the product (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987, quoted by Robert et al, 1994). In order to measure this variable, we selected the scale of Robert et al, (1994) which is made up of three items - Unfamiliar/Familiar; Experienced/Inexperienced; Informed/Uninformed – and is measured on a seven-point differential semantic scale.

Data analysis and interpretation

Our study shows that congruence has a positive influence on attitude toward the brand. We have also shown that the pertinent and expected dimensions of the pairing have an impact on attitude toward the brand, in that they make it more favorable. The expected dimension of the pairing also tends to generate favorable evaluations of the brand. We should also note that moderate congruence is more efficient than high or low congruence. We found that the attitude of individuals prior to their exposure to advertising posters strengthens the pairing’s global congruence and the attitude toward the same brand after exposure. Similarly, the moderating role of familiarity with the brand and that of involvement in the product category was confirmed. We find that all the hypotheses are in agreement with the literature except for the third hypothesis. We can also confirm that congruence plays a determining role in the efficiency of the celebrity endorsement process, since it alters attitudes favorably. Moreover, the pairing’s pertinent and expected dimensions play an essential role in generating favorable attitudes toward the brand. There are seven hypotheses in our study. The first five deal with the effects of congruence in its various degrees on attitude toward the brand. The three other hypotheses correspond to the moderating role of the attitude toward the brand prior to exposure, of familiarity with the brand, and of involvement in the product. These hypotheses represent causality links between the various variables of our model. Moreover, we opted to test this model using four Tunisian celebrities: Hend Chaouch, Sofiane Chaari, Ismail Youmbai, and Sami Elfekhri. All the hypotheses in our study could then be tested via simple linear regression.

H1: High congruence between celebrity and brand has a direct positive influence on attitude toward the brand

We tested this hypothesis on the pairing (Hend/Toyota), taking into account the fact that it is perceived both as a highly congruent one, i.e., (pertinent/expected) since it makes sense: (a rally driver endorsing a car brand), and as an expected one (this celebrity uses a Toyota car to go shopping). Thus applying the regression application shows that a pairing’s high congruence has a significant effect on attitude toward the brand (signification p = 0.000). Analysis of the regression coefficients shows the positive effect of high congruence (beta = +0.899) on attitude toward the brand. Examination of these findings allows us to validate Hypothesis H1 and to conclude that when individuals perceive high congruence for a pairing (brand/celebrity) they become more favorable attitude toward this brand. This agrees with the research of Kamins and Gupta (1994). The findings offer support for H

H2: the more the brand/celebrity pairing is perceived as pertinent the better the attitude toward the brand

We tested this hypothesis on two pairings which are perceived as pertinent. Two regressions were carried out, the first between the pertinent feature of the (Hend/Toyota) pairing and the attitude toward the Toyota brand, the second between the pertinent nature of the (Ismail/Toyota) pairing, and attitude toward the Toyota.
Table 3. Results of the two simple linear regressions for pertinence and attitude toward Toyota

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sig p</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pertinent side in the (Hend/Toyota) pairing → attitude toward Toyota</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.842</td>
<td>+0.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pertinent side in the (Ismail/Toyota) pairing → attitude toward Toyota</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.922</td>
<td>+0.960</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Results of testing Hypothesis H3

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<th></th>
<th>Sig p</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expected side in the (Hend/Toyota) pairing → attitude toward Toyota</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.758</td>
<td>+0.871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected side in the (Sofian/Toyota) pairing → attitude toward Toyota</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.939</td>
<td>+0.235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

brand. The table below sums up the findings for both regressions. Table 3

Our empirical results support the existence of a significant positive relationship between the pertinent side in the (Hend/Toyota) pairing and attitude toward Toyota (Sig p = 0.000 <0.05; beta1 = +0.917). For the second pairing, there is an equally significant positive correlation between the pertinent side of the (Ismail/Toyota) pairing and the attitude toward Toyota (Sig p = 0.000 <0.05; beta2 = +0.960). We can add that the pertinent dimension in both pairings accounts for the high percentage: R2 (Hend/Toyota) = 84.2%; R2 (Ismail/Toyota) = 92.2% of the attitude toward Toyota. These results confirm Hypothesis H2. Thus the more the pairing is perceived as pertinent by the exposed individual, the more favorable the attitude toward the brand. These results support H1a

H3: The more the brand/celebrity pairing is perceived as expected, the better the attitude toward the brand

We tested this hypothesis on two pairings which are perceived as expected. We carried out two simple regressions, the first between the expectedness of the (Hend/Toyota) pairing and attitude toward Toyota, the second between the expectedness of the (Sboui/Toyota) pairing and attitude toward Toyota. Table 4.

According to this table, the relationship between the expected side in the first pairing and the attitude toward the brand is significant in a positive way (Sig p = 0.000; beta1 = 0.871). It is the same for the second pairing (Sig p = 0.000; beta2 = +0.235). In other words, the more the pairing is perceived as expected by the exposed individual, the more favorable the attitude toward the brand. Accordingly, these findings do not confirm Hypothesis H3.

H4: Moderate congruence (pertinent and unexpected pairing) produces a stronger effect on attitude toward the brand than does low congruence (non pertinent and unexpected pairing), or high pertinence (pertinent and expected pairing)

To check this hypothesis, we carried out three simple linear regressions on the following three pairings:

- (Ismail/Toyota) → moderate: (pertinent and unexpected)
- (Sami/Toyota) → low: (non pertinent and unexpected)
- (Hend/Toyota) → high: (pertinent and expected)

Thus the degree of congruence represents the explanatory variable, while the attitude toward the brand represents the explained variable. The table below displays the findings. Table 5

In this table we notice that the indicator of the regression quality of the R2 model, related to the moderately-congruent pairing, displays a higher value when compared to the two other values in the two other cases. This leads us to confirm Hypothesis H4 and to support the postulate according to which the impact of congruence on attitude toward the brand is stronger than when congruence is high or low. These results support H1a

H5: The attitude toward the brand prior to exposure has a moderating effect on the relationship between congruence and attitude toward the brand after exposure.

We tested this hypothesis on the pairings (Sofiane/Toyota) and (Ismail/Toyota). Two simple linear regressions were constructed. The following table
Table 5. Results of testing Hypothesis H4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderate congruence→ attitude toward Toyota</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.927</td>
<td>+0.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low congruence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ attitude toward Toyota</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.890</td>
<td>+0.944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High congruence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ attitude toward Toyota</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.808</td>
<td>+0.899</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Results of testing Hypothesis H5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sofiane overall congruence → attitude after exposure (Sofiane/Toyota)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.967</td>
<td>+0.983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of individual after exposure → relationship between overall congruence and attitude after exposure (Sofiane/Toyota)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.962</td>
<td>+0.981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ismail overall congruence → attitude after exposure (Ismail/Toyota)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.890</td>
<td>+0.944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of individual after exposure → relationship between overall congruence and attitude after exposure (Ismail/Toyota)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.553</td>
<td>+0.744</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

provides the findings: Table 6

The results obtained show that the quality indicator of R2 regression fell (0.967→ 0.962) after the introduction of the variable: the attitude toward the brand before the exposure of the individual to the advertisement, i.e. the impact of congruence on attitude, is influenced by this variable. We thus confirm Hypothesis H5. To improve these results, we tested this hypothesis on the (Ismail/Toyota) pairing. The results again showed that the indicator of regression quality R2 (0.890→ 0.553) also fell (0.890→ 0.553) for this pairing after the introduction of the prior attitude toward the brand. We may therefore conclude that this variable moderates the relationship between congruence and attitude toward the brand after exposure. H5 is therefore confirmed.

H6: Familiarity with the brand has a moderating effect on congruence and on attitude toward the brand

We tested this hypothesis on the pairings (Sami/Toyota) and (Ismail/Toyota). Two linear regressions were performed for this test. See Table 7:

The table shows that the quality indicator of regression R2 fell (0.927→ 0.899) after the variable ‘familiarity with the brand’ was introduced. In other words, the impact of congruence on attitude toward the brand is influenced by this variable. We also tested this hypothesis on the (Ismail/Toyota) pairing. The results show that the quality indicator of regression R2 also fell (0.890→0.793) for this pairing after the introduction of the variable ‘familiarity with the brand’. Hypothesis H6 is therefore confirmed.

H7: Involvement in the product has a moderating effect on the relationship between congruence and attitude toward the brand.

To verify this hypothesis, two simple linear regressions were carried out on the two pairings (Hend/Toyota) and (Sami/Toyota). The table below shows the findings: Table 8

Results drawn from the first pairing (Hend/Toyota) show that the R2 regression quality indicator increased (0.808→0.812) after adding the variable: ‘involvement in the product category’. This confirms the hypothesis that involvement has an influence on the relationship between pairing congruence and attitude toward the brand. This hypothesis was also tested on the pairing (Sami/Toyota). We noticed here that the R2 regression quality indicator fell (0.927→0.867) for this pairing after the variable ‘involvement in the product category’ was introduced. These results support H1a.

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Our study shows that congruence has a positive
Table 7. Results of testing Hypothesis H6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall congruence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ attitude after exposure (Sami/Toyota)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.927</td>
<td>+.963</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity with brand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ relationship between overall congruence and attitude after exposure (Sami/Toyota)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.899</td>
<td>+.948</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>R²</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall congruence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ attitude after exposure (Ismail/Toyota)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.890</td>
<td>+.944</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity with the brand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ relationship between overall congruence and attitude after exposure (Ismail/Toyota)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.793</td>
<td>+.890</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Results of testing Hypothesis 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall congruence (Hend/Toyota) → attitude after exposure</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.808</td>
<td>+.899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in product category → relationship between overall congruence and attitude after exposure (Hend/Toyota)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.812</td>
<td>+.901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>R²</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall congruence (Sami/Toyota) → attitude after exposure</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.927</td>
<td>+.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in product category → relationship between overall congruence and attitude after exposure (Sami/Toyota)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.867</td>
<td>+.931</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

influence on attitude toward the brand. We have also shown that the pertinent dimension and expectedness of the pairing exert an influence on attitude toward the brand, making it more favorable. The expectedness of the pairing also tends to generate favorable evaluations of the brand. We also note that moderate congruence is more efficient in this regard than low or high congruence (H4). We found that the attitude of the individual before exposure to advertising posters strengthens the impact of the overall congruence of the pairing and the attitude toward this same brand after exposure. In the same way, the moderating role of familiarity with the brand and of involvement in the product category has also been demonstrated.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that using famous persons in the advertising image has considerable effects on consumer reactions. These stars constitute an emotional lever for increasing the brand’s renown. Celebrity marketing thus strengthens the company’s image and gives it an imposing dimension which confers an advantage over its competitors. However, the advertisers’ choice of celebrities must be carefully considered, since the risks associated with an unsuccessful pairing (brand/celebrity) can be hard to recover from. In fact, the main objective of our research has been to study the role of congruence and that of these two dimensions in forming attitudes toward the brand. We conducted this research on a convenience sample of two hundred young people, who were asked to evaluate four advertising posters. The choice of the celebrities and of the brand was made by a group of Master of Marketing students, who were asked to select pairs that provided a wide variation in terms of congruence with the brand. Our findings are as follows. We have shown that high congruence between the pairing (celebrity/brand) encourages a positive attitude toward the brand. Hence, a (celebrity/brand) pairing that has resonance, and that contributes to communicating a message about the brand in a clear fashion, has an influence on the exposed individual’s evaluation of the brand being promoted. Similarly, a (celebrity/brand) pairing corresponds to a predetermined scheme on the brand, which means that an expected pairing has a
significant positive effect on attitude toward the brand. We have also demonstrated that moderate congruence (pertinent and unexpected pairing) is more efficient than high congruence (pertinent and expected) or low congruence (non pertinent and unexpected). Moreover, we have confirmed through our model the impact of three other moderating variables. These are the individual's attitude toward the brand before exposure to the advertising poster, familiarity with the brand, and involvement in the product category.

Study Limitations and future research:

This work is not without certain shortcomings. In fact, throughout our research certain weaknesses have been identified, which need to be addressed here. These include:

- Limitations inherent in the nature of research: first, the existing literature does not describe the brand/celebrity congruence in sufficient detail. Most research studies instead deal with endorsement in its overall dimension. Moreover, given the complexity of such research, we were not able to deal with all aspects of the topic.

- Limitations related to methodology: first, the quality of our scales is questionable and we must try to improve them. Moreover, we relied on only four celebrities, while the number of celebrities present in the field of advertising is very large. In fact, the same company may use different celebrities according to the degree of the impact of their association with the brand, because each brand must struggle to capture the public's attention.

Nevertheless, these limitations do not affect our optimism, because our study has opened up several new avenues for further research. For instance, it would be useful to go back to the results of the current study while widening the scope of investigation to other brands and celebrities. It would also be interesting to explore the effects of other variables such as genre and physical attraction. It would also be timely to incorporate the nature and type of the product, that is to look for a two-level congruence: internal (between elements of the message itself) and external (broadcasting context and existence of competition). The nature of the message (informative or emotional) may also be decisive in the persuasion process.

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ANNEXE : 04 Toyota PRINT AD