Celebrities in Advertising: Looking for Congruence or Likability?

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ABSTRACT

The choice of a celebrity endorser for a brand is an important topic in advertising and marketing, as considerable time and effort resources are dedicated to finding the right celebrity to represent a given organization. Celebrities used as endorsers in advertisements are often very popular ones. However, from a cognitive point of view (and a more academic one), congruence between brand and celebrity seems to be very important too. Based on affective and cognitive theories to explain endorsement effectiveness, congruence between brand and celebrity is shown to be as effective as celebrity likability. Moreover, congruence between brand and celebrity as well as celebrity likability have an impact on the predisposition toward the ad, which in turn influences brand beliefs and purchase intention. © 2012 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

INTRODUCTION

Brands all over the world use celebrities to advertise their products. As early as 1890, actress Sarah Bernhardt appeared on posters for La Diaphane, a famous French brand of rice powder at that time (Lehu, 1993). The use of celebrities in advertising is not, therefore, a new phenomenon, but has become increasingly widespread over the past 20 years. Brands such as Pepsi have featured stars such as Michael Jackson, Madonna, or the Spice Girls, with varying impact (Erdogan, 1999). Pizza Hut launched its restaurants on the international market with icons that are almost universally recognized, such as Cindy Crawford, Linda Evangelista, and Pamela Anderson, and more recently Justin Bieber. Some stars have several contracts with different brands: it is estimated that Michael Jordan, who appears in advertisements for Nike, Coke, Wheaties, Mc Donald's, Hanes, Oakley, and Gatorade, has an impact worth about 14 billion dollars on the American economy (Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001). Nespresso has been for years the fastest growing of all Nestlé's products (Smale, 2009), partly because of effective advertisements featuring George Clooney. Stars have become a vital component of advertising for certain categories of product,

such as perfumes and cosmetics. It seems that once a celebrity becomes famous and popular, he/she immediately appears in an advertisement and sometimes several at the same time. For instance, in a single week, French footballer Zinedine Zidane appeared on posters for Dior perfume and Leader Price hard-discount supermarkets, as well as TV commercials for Dannon yoghurt.

The question, for advertising agencies and brands alike, is how to choose a celebrity for advertising. What should one take into account as a priority? Are awareness and the popularity of the celebrity enough to ensure advertisement effectiveness? What are the other factors that could play a role in and explain celebrity endorsement effectiveness? Alongside this phenomenon, research into the role of celebrities in advertising has also increased since the 1990s (Amos, Holmes, & Strutton, 2008; Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1991; Pringle & Binet, 2005; Seno & Lukas, 2007). These works have highlighted several explanatory factors, with congruence being one of the most important determinants. What are the effects of congruence on advertisement effectiveness? Is it better to choose a celebrity who is first and foremost popular or one congruent with the brand? These are the questions this research will more specifically investigate.

CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT: THEORY AND EFFECTIVENESS FACTORS

Celebrity endorsement is a phenomenon where celebrities lend their image to brands. Several researchers have attempted to define endorsement over the last 20 years (see Erdogan, 1999), and for McCracken, "the celebrity endorser is defined 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" (1989, p. 310).

Research has attempted to elucidate the reasons why companies invest so much money in communication featuring celebrities (Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001). There are many reasons, but firstly, it is significant that celebrity endorsements are a way of avoiding anonymity and standing out from the competition in saturated markets. For example, in the cosmetics and perfume industry, new products are being launched all the time. Cosmetics brands can no longer achieve recognition merely due to the intrinsic quality of their products, but do so, above all, by the image they project through their advertising campaigns, generally by featuring movie stars, models or singers. Celebrities make an impression on consumers. According to Jacques Helleu, artistic director for Chanel, "it is the only way of making a sufficiently strong impression on consumers' memories to trigger a purchase when they are in a sales outlet at a later date" (Devilliers, 2004). Beyond this objective of differentiation, it also gives brands an opportunity to focus their positioning in consumers' minds. Sometimes, celebrity endorsements also give a brand considerable exposure in the press, who are more likely to report on events concerning the brand if the celebrities are present (e.g., brand promotion parties; Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001).

The impact on sales is more difficult to assess. Recent advertising campaigns for Sloggi, featuring the French tennis player and singer Yannick Noah, led to a 47% increase in the brand's sales for the men's market and 5% for the women's market over the past 10 months, which is an excellent result in a declining market (Neumann, 2006). The results of celebrity endorsements are, however, highly variable as there are many factors involved, including the choice of celebrity and the quality of the advertising itself, as well as media planning, and even press relations.

This is why it is interesting to understand how endorsement works and identify the decisive factors in its effectiveness. From this perspective, the main models devised to explain the type of relationship that develops between celebrities and consumers are presented. These models are essential to our understanding of the influence of celebrities on brand perception. Of course endorsement effectiveness depends on advertisement execution quality, media planning and public relations, etc. but above all it is linked to the choice of celebrity, as shown through these different models.

Source Attractiveness and Source Credibility Models

The attractiveness model assumes that the effectiveness of the message depends on the physical characteristics of the source, which make it attractive (Chao, Wührer, & Werani, 2005; Till & Busler, 2000). A celebrity spokesperson's physical attractiveness has a positive impact on brand recall, attitude toward the brand and purchasing intent (Joseph, 1982; Kahle & Homer, 1985). Here, the endorser's physical attractiveness is assumed to have an influence on the target's acceptance of the advertising, particularly due to the phenomenon of identification. The effectiveness of the message depends on the endorser's similarity, likeableness, and familiarity. While there is no doubt that a celebrity endorser may improve attitude toward advertising and a brand, its impact on purchasing behavior is less clear (Erdogan, 1999). The attractiveness of the source is not the only characteristic of a celebrity to take into account (Friedman & Friedman, 1979) and is mainly significant for brands related to physical appearance (Kamins, 1990).

The source credibility model was developed in the 1950s by Hovland and Weiss (1951). According to this model, the effectiveness of a message depends on the perceived level of expertise and trustworthiness of an endorser (Ohanian, 1991; Spry, Pappu, & Cornwell, 2011). Expertise refers to the extent to which the endorser is perceived as a valid source of information (Erdogan, 1999). It is a matter of determining whether the advertising target perceives the endorser as having a certain level of experience, knowledge, and know-how that makes their recommendation of a product and/or brand credible. Erdogan's (1999) review of previous literature indicated that a source perceived as highly credible is more effective and persuasive than a less credible one, as well as inducing a more positive change of attitude toward the brand or product and more changes in behavior. Trustworthiness refers to the endorser's honesty, credibility, and integrity, as perceived by the target audience. It is a matter of determining whether the consumer trusts the source for the honest, objective way the information is presented (Ohanian, 1991). However, as McCracken (1989) and Erdogan (1999) noted, limiting the assessment of an individual to certain dimensions may seem rather restrictive.

These models may seem attractive but they have been criticized on several levels (Bower & Landreth, 2001; Erdogan, 1999). They do not properly take into account the multifunctional aspect of certain characteristics of the source and there is no proof the dimensions examined are the correct ones. However, above all, these models seem incomplete as they do not consider all the perceptions and significance connected to a particular celebrity, merely focusing on certain characteristics of the endorser, so we do not feel they are capable of capturing what a person, as a whole, is capable of contributing to an advertisement. We think

McCracken's (1989) meaning transfer model, which includes all the cultural connotations of celebrities, is more suitable, as it explains the endorsement process as a whole.

McCracken's Meaning Transfer Model (1989)

This model has the advantage of including affective and cognitive aspects. The transfer theory relies on the endorsement process described by McCracken (1989). This process is based on the idea that, in consumer society, which is organized around culture, celebrities have a shared cultural significance in the eyes of consumers (McCracken, 1989). McCracken defines this transfer as the translation of the meaning of celebrity to a product or brand, for example, in advertisements with celebrity spokespersons. Endorsement is effective when an individual who buys and consumes the product appropriates the meaning associated with the celebrity, which has been transferred to the product.

The McCracken model makes it possible to explain how celebrities transmit an extensive set of associations to the brands they endorse. Therefore, before companies select celebrities to represent their brands, they need to ensure that the person conveys the right meaning.

It is precisely this congruence between personality and brand that facilitates meaning and affect transfer from one to the other (Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Lynch & Schuler, 1994; Misra & Beatty, 1990). It is thus useful to define this concept of congruence in greater detail.

THE ROLE OF CONGRUENCE BETWEEN BRAND AND CELEBRITY

The Role of Congruence

The term "congruence" is used in several research areas, particularly brand extension, co-branding, sponsoring, and endorsement. In all these cases, the aim is to assess the fit between a brand and another entity (a new product category, another brand, an event, or an individual; Fleck & Quester, 2007; Maille & Fleck, 2011). A variety of terms have been used (congruence, fit, link, "match up effect," etc.) but the general concept is the same.

In the field of celebrity spokespersons, congruence was not really defined as such until Misra and Beatty's work (1990, p. 161). They deduced that it consisted of the fact "that the highly relevant characteristics of the spokesperson are consistent with the highly relevant attributes of the brand." A number of authors have studied specific aspects of celebrities, such as gender and skin color (Huston, d'Ouville, & Willis, 2003) or physical attractiveness (Kamins, 1990), but few have analyzed congruence in the broader sense.

The Two Dimensions of Congruence

Heckler and Childers (1992) analyzed the congruence between visual and verbal elements in advertisements, adapting concepts used in social cognition and, particularly, the memorization of social characteristics, to advertising. Thus, they started from the concept of theme, which originates in verbal discourse and presents the general content of the story told by the advertisement. Congruence is then defined in two dimensions: *relevancy* and *expectancy*. Relevancy reflects the extent to which the information contained in the stimulus contributes to or prevents a clear identification of the main theme or message being communicated. Expectancy refers to the degree to which an item or piece of information fits into a predetermined pattern or structure evoked by this theme. This interesting approach suggests the concept of congruence may be two-dimensional. These two dimensions are also mentioned in the area of brand extensions (Lane, 2000; Tauber, 1988), but under different names. In the area of brand endorsement, a celebrity can be considered as relevant if there is a clear meaning why he/she endorses the brand or product. For instance, a NASCAR or Formula 1 driver who endorses a car brand is meaningful and this endorsement induces a clear message, because of the expertise of this celebrity in the brand category. On the other hand, a celebrity is expected if he/she corresponds to a pattern evoked by the message of the brand. For instance, a model would be expected to testimony on the quality of cosmetics. These two dimensions are independent as, for instance, a celebrity can be very relevant for a brand but not expected at all. For instance, in 2007 Vuitton presented a range of luxury luggage featuring Mikhail Gorbathev, Keith Richards, or Catherine Deneuve. All these celebrities are relevant because they travel a lot and they are very likely to own top-of-the-range brands of luggage, or at least they have the means to buy some. However, someone such as Mikhail Gorbachev was absolutely unexpected as he almost never appeared in any advertisement, as this is totally unusual for a former statesman.

The Impact on the Brand of Congruence between a Celebrity and the Brand Endorsed

At first glance, it may seem logical that congruence between the celebrity and the brand endorsed should have a positive impact on the brand's image and that, the stronger the link, the more impact the association should have on the brand. Furthermore, the better suited, more relevant, or congruent the celebrity/brand pair is perceived to be, the greater the positive response to advertising in terms of attitude or even purchasing intent (Batra & Homer, 2004; Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1989, 1990; Lynch & Schuler, 1994; Misra & Beatty, 1990; Till & Busler, 2000).
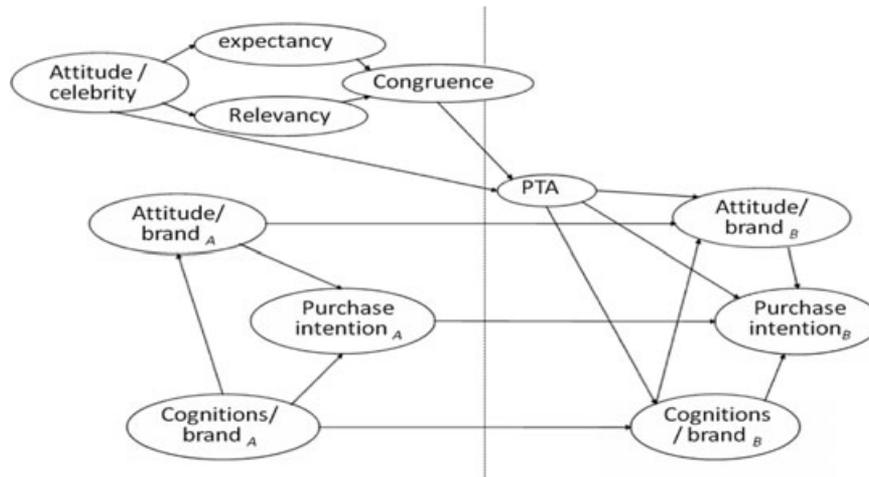
Figure 1. Research model.
Note: Variables on the left of the vertical line were measured at period 1, variables on the right at period 2.

However, it is possible to imagine a more complex relationship and examine an alternative hypothesis, that is, that a certain level of incongruence may have a positive impact on response to advertising, particularly in terms of brand image (Fleck & Maille, 2010). Indeed, a moderate level of incongruence between an expectation and an object may be beneficial, provided it is perceived as interesting and positive (Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989). In that case, a relatively poor fit between brand and celebrity may be stimulating and encourage individuals to process the information more intensively and elaborate more (Lee, 2000). In the case of sponsoring, a slight inconsistency between the sponsor and the event should lead to enhanced recall and more favorable attitudes than in the case of total consistency (Jagre, Watson, & Watson, 2001). However, if the incongruence is so great that consumers have to change their cognitive structures to comprehend it, they have a tendency to exhibit negative reactions, leading to negative cognitive elaboration and a feeling of frustration (D'Astous & Bitz, 1995).

PROPOSITIONS

Finally the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement seems to be explained by two types of variables: The advertisement processing could be quite holistic and based upon affect: a positive affect toward the celebrity could lead to a halo effect and being transferred to the brand. For instance, someone who is a fan of a certain star will have a positive affect toward all the brands this star is talking about positively. This can be due to the way that person trusts this star or to a simple mimetic and projective effect. In that case, attitude toward the celebrity would be relevant as a measure of attractiveness, whatever the reason (physical attractiveness, personality, etc.).

On the other hand, this processing could be quite analytic and based on cognitive inferences. Here, the reasoning will be based on the reason why the celebrity endorses the product. Congruence could then be evaluated as a function of the expertise and/or the credibility of the celebrity when he/she has to represent the brand. In that case, brand/celebrity congruence would be relevant as a measure of how well both of them match together.

So the first question is to know which of these two variables would have the greatest effect. Another question is to know if people would be influenced by their affect to estimate brand-celebrity congruence. Would a person who really likes a celebrity always find him/her congruent, whatever the context? So, is there any correlation between attitude toward the celebrity and congruence evaluation?

MODEL CONSTRUCTION

To address the research question, the model depicted in Figure 1 has been developed. This model is inspired by Brown and Stayman's (1992) meta-analysis, as well as recent research by Bergkvist and Rossiter (2008) and our earlier discussion. Brown and Stayman's (1992) findings support the dual mediation model (MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986) "which posits a direct effect of ad attitude on brand attitude as well as an indirect effect via brand cognitions". In their study about advertisement likability (L_{ad}), Bergkvist and Rossiter (2008) assessed the effect of L_{ad} on brand attitude (A_b), brand beliefs, and purchase intention. In their model, these three latter variables are measured at two points in time. Each of these influences its counterpart (i.e., A_b measured at t_0 has an influence on A_b measured a few weeks later, etc.), according to the idea that the best predictor of an attitude or a belief is the prior attitude or belief.
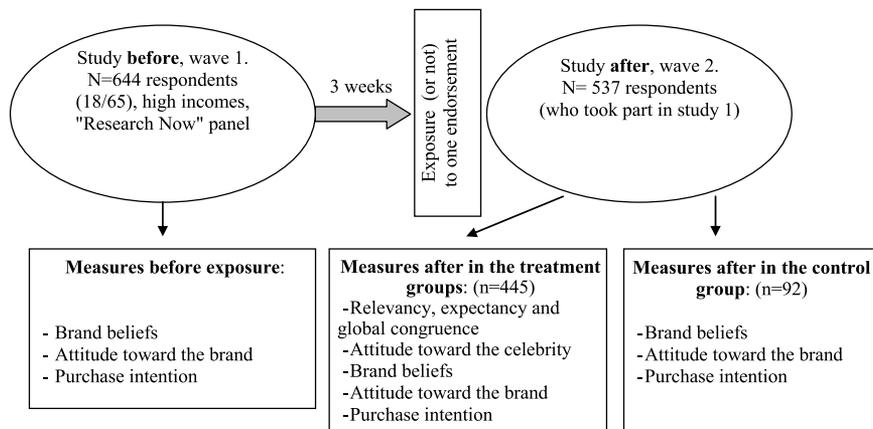
Figure 2. The design of the research.

DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

In order to test this model, an experiment was conducted with before/after measures (three weeks between) and control groups. Figure 2 summarizes the research design. This experiment manipulates the combinations between brands and celebrities so that the level of congruence between the celebrity and the brand and the likability of the celebrities could vary. Thus, the experimental design was a 2 (brands: Dior and Yves-Saint-Laurent) × 4 (celebrities for each brand, varying in terms of relevancy — high, low — and expectancy — high, low) × 2 (time period — before, after exposure) mixed factorial design, with a separate control group, which was not exposed to any celebrity-brand combination. This variation in brand/celebrity congruence and attitude toward the celebrity may enable us to explain the eventual evolution of consumer response to the brand/celebrity combination, may it be cognitive, affective, or conative. As explained above, predisposition toward the advertisement was added to the model as a mediator.

Choice of Brands and Celebrities

All the pairings were fictive, but real brands and real celebrities were used to increase the ecological validity of this study. Two luxury brands were selected (Yves Saint-Laurent and Dior). This is relevant with the context of the study, because luxury brands use celebrities extensively in their advertising. The sample was chosen according to the usual profile of luxury brands' customers, with subjects aged between 18 and 65, and with high incomes. We also selected four celebrities for each brand, chosen to possess various levels of congruence, likability, and image. Each respondent of the treatment group was exposed to only one condition of congruence (one brand/celebrity combination), and in the control group there was no exposure.

This model includes brand perceptions and purchase intentions, which improves nomological validity. Examination of the relationships will make it possible to compare the respective effects of congruence and attitude toward the celebrity on pre-attitude toward the advertisement (PTA). It would be awkward to use the concept of attitude toward the advertisement, even though it is widely used in this kind of model, because in this study subjects do not see a real advertisement. Actually, showing a real advertisement would have introduced some other biases linked, for instance, to its execution. It is possible to significantly change the style and therefore the image of a celebrity for a picture. Thus, the subjects were simply exposed to the principle of associating a celebrity with a brand in an advertisement for that brand, and were shown a picture of the celebrity and the logo of the brand. This is why it is rather a question of pre-attitude toward an advertisement combining celebrity X and brand Y than a question of attitude toward the advertisement. To assess concepts before and after the stimulus, the study was conducted at two points of time (A and B). Like in Bergkvist and Rossiter's (2008) model, brand beliefs have a direct and indirect (through attitude) effect on purchase intention.

After exposure to a stimulus (brand endorsement by a celebrity), it can be expected that congruence (and its two dimensions, relevancy, and expectancy) and/or attitude toward the celebrity influence PTA. Also, as mentioned earlier, we expect an "affective halo" to occur: an individual who appreciates a celebrity may think that she/he is congruent with whatever brand is endorsed. As demonstrated by Brown and Stayman (1992), PTA has a direct and indirect influence (through brand beliefs and attitude) on purchase intention. As explained by Lafferty, Goldsmith, and Hult (2004) and Bergkvist and Rossiter (2008), all constructs measured in A (first period) will be strongly related to their counterparts' measures in B (second period).

Measures

Attitude toward the brand (A_b) was measured by a very classical four-item scale ("I like [brand X]," "I appreciate [brand X]," "I am favourable to [brand X]," "[brand X] is a good brand"). This scale is based on the affective part of previous attitude scales (e.g., Batra & Stayman, 1990; Batra & Stephens, 1994). The coefficient alpha for this scale was 0.93, both for wave 1 and wave 2.

Attitude toward the celebrity was measured by an adaptation of the brand attitude scale ("I like [celebrity X]," "I appreciate [celebrity X]," "I am favourable to [celebrity X]," "[celebrity X] is somebody I like"). The coefficient alpha for this scale was 0.97 (this scale was used in wave 2 only).

Purchase intention was measured by a single item (if I had to buy [product category], I would probably buy [brand X]).

Brand/celebrity congruence was measured both globally (three-item scale: "[brand X] and [celebrity Y] go well together," "[brand X] is well matched with [celebrity Y]," "In my opinion, [celebrity Y] is very appropriate as a celebrity endorser for [brand X]") and through the two dimensions of congruence, relevancy and expectancy (both two-item scales; Fleck & Quester, 2007). The coefficient alphas for these scales (measured at wave 2 only) were 0.97, 0.84, and 0.92, respectively.

A three-item scale to capture the *predisposition toward the advertisement* combining brand X and celebrity Y was built specifically on the basis of the usual scale for attitude toward the advertisement ("I like the idea that [celebrity Y] appears in an ad for [brand X]," "I appreciate seeing [celebrity Y] in an ad for [brand X]," "[celebrity Y] in an ad for [brand X] is something I like"). The coefficient alpha for this scale was 0.97 (wave 2 only).

Brand cognitions (i.e., brand beliefs or brand image) were measured by a 24-item scale. Most of the items came from prior studies realized by Taylor Nelson Sofres for these brands;[1] seven items were taken from other brand-image studies or created by the authors.

Factorial analysis (with varimax rotation) was conducted on the image items and four dimensions were found: rarity, pride, provocation, and "haute-couture".[2] In subsequent analyses, factor scores were used for each of these dimensions. Usual controlled variables were also measured, namely usage frequency of the product category and brand, gender, age, profession, income, and region.

Table 1. Evolution and Significance of Brand Attitude and Purchase Intent after Exposure to Endorsement.

	Wave 1		Wave 2	
Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
A_{b1}	4.52	1.62	4.78	1.55
A_{b2}	4.80	1.55	4.99	1.56
A_{b3}	4.71	1.57	4.93	1.49
A_{b4}	5.55	1.19	5.68	1.12
Purchase intent	3.86	1.74	4.10	1.68

Note: All ps are significant at the 0.01 level.

RESULTS

The stability of variables between the two periods in the control group was first checked with t-tests: no item (among the attitude, purchase intent, brand cognitions, and subjective knowledge variables), except one, significantly changed during the time lapse.

Some t-tests show the exposure to the stimulus (i.e., the endorsement) has an effect on the measured variables: in the treatment group (individuals exposed to a brand endorsement by a celebrity), 8 of the 24 brand-belief items changed significantly. All the items from the other scales changed significantly.[3]

Thus, it is possible to conclude that the single exposure of a consumer to a simple stimulus (a sentence explaining that a celebrity is about to endorse a brand) has an influence, at least in the short term, on some beliefs and feelings about the brand in question.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS 16 assessed construct validity. All 17 study constructs were included in the CFA. Ten latent variables used a single item: twice (wave 1 and wave 2) four variables (i.e., factor scores) measuring brand cognitions and a variable to measure purchase intent. In this case, Gerbing and Anderson's (1988) formula was used to fix the corresponding coefficients. The results suggest a good fit to the data ($n = 445$, $\chi^2 = 350.98$ [degree of freedom (dof) = 225; $p = 0$], root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.036, SRMR = 0.017, and comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.990). Internal consistency of the measures was confirmed with construct reliabilities (Jöreskog's rho) that ranged from 0.84 to 0.97. Also, each construct demonstrated convergent validity by largely exceeding the Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion of 0.50 (AVE: average variance extracted); also, all factor loadings were greater than 0.5 and significant. A comparison of the AVE and the shared variances (i.e., squared correlations) of the latent constructs shows proof of discriminant validity. The AVE for each construct is larger than the respective shared variances (Table 2).

We then used AMOS 16 to test the model depicted in Figure 1, which fits the data quite well ($n = 445$,

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[1] These studies have been realized for firms by Taylor Nelson Sofres as survey conductor and have not been published.

[2] An example of items:
Rarity: "Some people use Brand X to impress other people"
Pride: "I am proud to use the products of Brand X"
Provocation: "Brand X is provocative"
Haute couture: "Brand X is associated with haute-couture".

[3] For the sake of brevity, the 24 belief items are not included in Table 1 but are available from the authors.

Table 2. Scale Analysis Results.

	AVE[a]	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10	V11	V12	V13	V14	V15	V16	V17
Attitude/celebrity (V1)	0.934	(0.97)[b]	0.12[c]	0.14	0.28	0.46	0.08	0.12	0.03	0.07	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.14	0	0	0	0.01
Expectancy (V2)	0.854	0.35	(0.92)	0.01	0.53	0.37	0.03	0.07	0.03	0.06	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.06	0.02	0.04	0.01	0
Relevancy (V3)	0.724	0.37	0.12	(0.84)	0.08	0.20	0.07	0.14	0.07	0.11	0	0	0.08	0.21	0.04	0.08	0	0
Congruency (V4)	0.926	0.53	0.73	0.28	(0.96)	0.74	0.03	0.10	0.01	0.06	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.11	0.01	0.03	0	0
PTA (V5)	0.920	0.68	0.61	0.45	0.86	(0.97)	0.07	0.18	0.03	0.1	0.04	0.03	0.05	0.19	0.02	0.03	0	0
Brand attitude A (V6)	0.855	0.28	0.17	0.26	0.18	0.27	(0.95)	0.58	0.64	0.42	0.05	0.02	0.67	0.44	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.02
Brand attitude B (V7)	0.863	0.35	0.26	0.38	0.32	0.42	0.76	(0.95)	0.4	0.69	0.04	0.04	0.41	0.59	0.03	0.07	0.04	0.03
Purchase intent A (V8)	—	0.17	0.18	0.27	0.12	0.18	0.80	0.63	—	0.56	0	0	0.50	0.36	0.05	0.06	0.02	0.01
Purchase intent B (V9)	—	0.27	0.24	0.33	0.24	0.31	0.65	0.83	0.75	—	0	0	0.34	0.50	0.04	0.11	0.01	0.01
Haute couture A (V10)	—	0.19	0.1	0.07	0.17	0.19	0.22	0.21	0.07	0.05	—	0.40	0.01	0	0	0	0.01	0.01
Haute couture B (V11)	—	0.17	0.08	0.03	0.17	0.17	0.13	0.19	−0.04	0	0.63	—	0	0	0	0	0	0.01
Pride A (V12)	—	0.21	0.16	0.28	0.16	0.22	0.82	0.64	0.71	0.58	0.12	0.03	—	0.53	0	0.02	0	0.01
Pride B (V13)	—	0.37	0.25	0.46	0.33	0.44	0.66	0.77	0.6	0.71	−0.02	−0.02	0.73	—	0	0	0	0
Provocation A (V14)	—	0.05	0.13	0.19	0.09	0.14	0.21	0.16	0.23	0.19	0.03	−0.05	−0.02	0.02	—	0.3	0	0
Provocation B (V15)	—	0.07	0.21	0.28	0.16	0.16	0.17	0.26	0.25	0.33	0.01	−0.02	0.15	0.05	0.55	—	0.01	0.02
Rarity A (V16)	—	0.03	0.08	0	0.01	−0.04	−0.19	−0.2	−0.15	−0.11	−0.09	0	−0.03	−0.04	0.05	0.09	—	0.62
Rarity B (V17)	—	0.09	0.06	0.07	0	−0.01	−0.15	−0.17	−0.09	−0.12	0.09	0.08	−0.08	0.04	0.05	0.13	0.62	—

Note:
[a]AVE = average variance extracted (Fornell & Larcker, 1981);
[b]Construct reliabilities (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) are on the diagonal;
[c]Shared variances are reported in the upper half of the matrix; correlations are in the lower half of the matrix.

Table 3. Standardized Total Effects for Congruence and Attitude toward the Celebrity.

	Congruence	Attitude toward the Celebrity
PTA	0.69	0.68
Brand attitude (period B)	0.16	0.16
Purchase intent (period B)	0.10	0.10

Note: This table can be read as follows: an increase of one unit in congruence results in an increase in purchase intent of 0.10 unit.

$\chi^2 = 692.151$ (ddl $= 313$; $p = 0$), RMSEA $= 0.034$, SRMR $= 0.052$, and CFI $= 0.970$).

A Chi-square test indicates that congruence has a stronger direct influence on PTA than attitude toward the celebrity (A_c) ($\Delta \chi^2$ [1] $= 40.1$, $p < 0.001$). However, attitude toward the celebrity is an antecedent of congruence: this variable thus has both direct and indirect effects on PTA. AMOS software delivers standardized total effects (Kline, 2005), which take into account direct effects (such as $A_c \rightarrow$ PTA) as well as indirect effects (such as $A_c \rightarrow$ congruence $\rightarrow$ PTA). Standardized total effects can be found in Table 3.

Congruence and attitude toward the celebrity have an almost identical effect on predisposition toward the advertisement, brand attitude, and purchase intent. The effects of PTA on its many dependant variables are interesting: PTA does not influence brand attitude or purchase intent, yet it does have an influence on some of the brand cognitions (namely provocation and pride), which in turn significantly impact brand attitude and purchase intent (both kind of cognitions influence purchase intent directly and indirectly, through brand attitude).

Expectancy has a much more important effect on congruence than relevancy (standardized coefficients, respectively, 0.62 vs. 0.11; a Chi-square test indicates these coefficients are significantly different, $\Delta \chi^2$ [1] $= 58.63$, $p < 0.001$). All other relationships hypothesized in the model are significant (see Table 4 and Figure 3).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From a theoretical point of view, a model integrating perceived congruence between brand and celebrity endorser has been proposed. First, the results show that the simple fact to expose individuals to the idea of a celebrity endorsement has an effect on brand image. It seems to confirm the theory of transfer, according to which associating a celebrity to a brand leads to a modification of brand image. Furthermore, the results have shown that the perceived congruence between brand and celebrity is at least as important as the attitude toward the celebrity when considering pre-attitude toward the advertisement featuring a celebrity endorsing a brand. At first glance, it seems that congruence has a stronger effect than attitude toward the celebrity, as the direct effect on predisposition toward the ad is significantly higher. It would mean that when evaluating a celebrity endorsement, individuals follow a more cognitive route, estimating above all how congruent the celebrity is with the brand he/she endorses. However, it is particularly interesting to notice that attitude toward the celebrity influences congruence, which in turn influences predisposition toward the advertisement. When a celebrity is widely appreciated, people who like him/her are more likely to find her/him congruent with any brand, suggesting a bias linked with affect. Then, the affective evaluation has an impact on the cognitive evaluation so that at the end, both are to be taken into account. A celebrity endorsement is effective when it is congruent with the brand and also when the celebrity is appreciated or popular, with a compensation effect between these two variables.

The effect of congruence and likability is essential in terms of advertisement effectiveness given that, as shown by the results, predisposition toward the advertisement has an indirect positive effect on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention, which is mediated by beliefs about the brand. Like attitude toward the ad, predisposition toward the ad is central as it has no direct effect on attitude toward the brand or purchase intention, but it has an effect on brand beliefs, which in turn influence brand attitude and purchase intention. These results are consistent with prior works (for instance, Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2008). Interestingly, not all the cognitions about the brand are impacted by congruence and likability or impact brand attitude or purchase intent. In fact, it depends on the beliefs and cognitions associated to the celebrity, that process being idiosyncratic by nature, even if these beliefs lead to a generally shared cultural meaning (McCracken, 1989). It would be interesting, in a future research, to elicit the associations linked to the celebrity in order to examine this issue, and then to clearly demonstrate the transfer theory.

It is also interesting to examine the respective effects of relevancy and expectancy on congruence. The standardized effect of expectancy is more than five times higher than the effect of relevancy. Thus, the level of congruence that an individual holds about an endorsement is almost entirely driven by expectancy. As we noted previously, some authors believe that in certain cases, a moderate level of incongruence may have a positive impact on response to advertising (Fleck & Maille, 2010). In our case, a moderate level of congruence is expected to occur if expectancy is moderate. Yet this effect on the predisposition toward the ad will be highest if congruence is high. In the luxury market, consumers are used to endorsement, contrarily to some other product categories such as cleaning products; they are also used to seeing endorsers from various backgrounds, such as cinema, music, sports, etc. It is thus possible that no real background or experience is needed for a celebrity to be relevant—consumers would just check

Table 4. Structural Links between the Variables (Links in Italic are not Significant).

	Standardized Coefficient	p
Relevancy ← Attitude/celebrity	0.38	0.000**
Expectancy ← Attitude/celebrity	0.35	0.000**
Congruency ← Attitude/celebrity	0.27	0.000**
Congruency ← Expectancy	0.62	0.000**
Congruency ← Relevancy	0.11	0.004**
PTA ← Congruency	0.69	0.000**
PTA ← Attitude/celebrity	0.32	0.000**
Haute couture B ← Haute couture A	0.62	0.000**
Provocation B ← Provocation A	0.53	0.000**
Rarity B ← Rarity A	0.62	0.000**
Brand attitude A ← Pride A	0.84	0.000**
Brand attitude A ← Haute couture A	0.23	0.000**
Brand attitude A ← Rarity A	−0.20	0.000**
Brand attitude A ← Provocation A	0.22	0.000**
Pride B ← Pride A	0.67	0.000**
Pride B ← PTA	0.30	0.000**
Rarity B ← PTA	*0.01*	0.748
Provocation B ← PTA	0.10	0.028*
Haute couture B ← PTA	*0.05*	0.215
Brand attitude B ← PTA	*0.04*	0.182
Brand attitude B ← Brand attitude A	0.30	0.000**
Purchase intent A ← Pride A	0.23	0.021*
Purchase intent A ← Haute couture A	−0.07	0.071
Purchase intent A ← Rarity A	*−0.05*	0.215
Purchase intent A ← Provocation A	0.13	0.002**
Brand attitude B ← Pride B	0.55	0.000**
Brand attitude B ← Haute couture B	0.16	0.000**
Brand attitude B ← Rarity B	−0.18	0.000**
Brand attitude B ← Provocation B	0.19	0.000**
Purchase intent A ← Brand attitude A	0.59	0.000**
Purchase intent B ← Purchase intent A	0.32	0.000**
Purchase intent B ← Pride B	*0.10*	0.115
Purchase intent B ← Haute couture B	−0.09	0.004**
Purchase intent B ← Rarity B	*0.00*	0.916
Purchase intent B ← Brand attitude B	0.56	0.000**
Purchase intent B ← Provocation B	0.11	0.001**
Purchase intent B ← PTA	*−0.02*	0.592

*Significant at 0.05 level,
****significant at 0.01 level.
Note: italic indicates a relationship not significant at 0,10 level.

whether the personality and appearance of the endorser are relevant with the brand. This would explain the low influence of relevance on congruence, contrarily to some other works (Maille & Fleck, 2011). Another explanation is related to the way memory works. Given an expected celebrity appearing in an ad matches a scheme in memory, the matching will make the encoding of such information stronger and more efficient and the link between the brand and the celebrity (Keller, 1993) will thus be easy to create and strong.

From a managerial point of view, this contribution is also important: brands usually choose endorsers who are appreciated by their target market. Our research suggests that this is not sufficient and that it is also important to take into account the perceived congruence between brand and celebrity, in order to maximize the effectiveness of the advertisement. Thus, it would be

useful for firms to conduct an *ad hoc* study on their target audience in order to estimate the levels of congruence and attitude toward a list of possible celebrities. Obviously, the present use of measures of popularity or preferred personalities is not totally adapted to the question of celebrity endorsement.

Data collection was conducted on a sample of the target population, by a custom market research company, which ensures good external validity. There are however limitations, mainly due to the experimental design: While an experimental design allows isolating effects, it can also reduce or enhance some other effects (Lynch, 1982). Like in any experimentation, this design presents a stimulus to people in nonreal conditions. This is why the study was designed so that it was as realistic as possible: brands and celebrities are real, only their combination is fictitious. Nevertheless, the
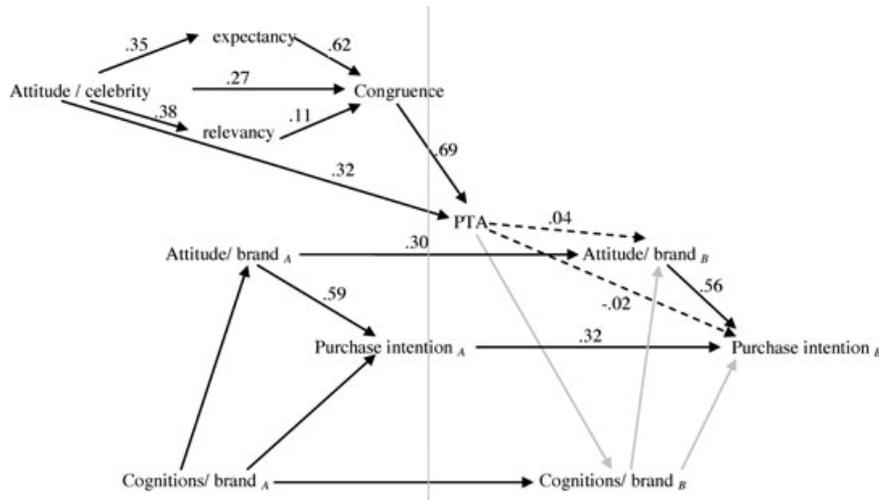
Figure 3. Test of the research model.
Note: Variables on the left of the vertical line were measured at period 1, variables on the right at period 2. Black solid lines indicate significant relationships, while the dashed lines are not significant. Gray lines, related to brand cognitions, indicate that relationships are significant for some of them only. For the sake of clarity, coefficients related to brand cognitions (16 in total) are omitted; they appear in Table 4.

context in which respondents learn about the brand-celebrity combination remains quite artificial. Moreover, the principle of a questionnaire always reinforces the cognitive process of a phenomenon. Effects that are linked with attention, particularly when this is weak, are mechanically lessened. However, we suffered the same issue of any study interested in understanding the cognitive process of individuals: it is difficult for a respondent to answer about a process objectively while being involved in that process at the same time. Also, the question arises if the absence of direct effect of predisposition toward the advertisement on attitude toward the brand and purchasing intention could be due to the experimental design. In fact, it can be supposed that after exposure to a real advertisement featuring a celebrity, the effect on memorization and effect should be greater. Moreover, it is possible that effects relative to attitude toward the celebrity and congruence may be different when mediated by attitude toward the advertisement rather than predisposition toward the advertisement featuring a celebrity.

Moreover, the choice of celebrities used in this study can be questioned. The celebrities concerned were selected with the help of the creative team from Havas Media Agency, the objective being to obtain varying levels of relevancy and expectancy. It turned out that in some cases, celebrities were not evaluated by respondents as experts expected, in terms of relevancy and expectancy. Thus, it seems it is difficult to forecast *a priori* how people would evaluate celebrities on these two dimensions and, as noted previously, it pleads in favor of the use of an *ad hoc* study in order to choose the right celebrity.

One last point and another limitation are linked to the stimulus respondents were exposed to: this was a

mere sentence explaining that celebrity Y would endorse brand X. This design perfectly fits the question addressed here: from a managerial point of view, the principle here is to preselect celebrities in a larger selection so they may be associated with brands in advertisements. This must of course be done before the advertisement is executed. However, advertisement execution may have a significant impact on consumers' evaluations. According to the clothes worn by the celebrity, their make-up, hair style, attitude and behavior as well as the overall mood of the advertisement (humorous or serious, for instance), very different effects on consumers' perceptions and evaluations can be expected. Thus, in real conditions, effects should be greater but not as easy to control.

Following this study, many future research projects could be conducted. First of all, it would be interesting to extend this work to other brands and other product categories. For instance, could the findings be generalized to lower involvement products? It could be hypothesized that for lower involvement products and/or less mature brands, brand image is less stable and not so well built (Machleit, Allen, & Madden, 1993). Thus, it should be easier to make brand image evolve than when it is very stable and strongly anchored in consumers' minds for a long time.

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