

# **Factors Predicting the Effectiveness of Sports Celebrity Endorsement Advertising: A Partial Replication and Extension**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research identifies key factors predicting the effectiveness of sports celebrity endorsement advertisements and examines correspondent inferences and endorser characteristics to predict factors that influence consumer attitudes toward the endorser, advertisement and brand. Purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of sports celebrities endorsing sports and non-sports brands. This study provides valuable implications to brand managers for sport celebrity endorsement and provides companies' with insight into the strategic use of their resources to gain advertising objectives and maximise return on investment with sports celebrity endorsement practices. The research is a partial replication and extension of Silvera and Austad (2004) study conducted in Norway. This study used a sports celebrity endorser and gained results from self-administered questionnaires with a total of 240 respondents. An important finding of the study revealed that there were no significant differences in consumer attitudes toward endorser, advertisement and brand when endorsing sports and non-sports brands. Although, the scope of research was extensive it was not without limitations including the use of convenience sampling, investigation of one endorser and examination of sports celebrity effectiveness in print advertisements only.

## **BACKGROUND**

Advertising has become part of our everyday lives, and we are exposed to over 1,500 advertising messages from a variety of sources including television, radio, billboards, flyers, mobile phones, grocery stores, public restrooms, cinemas, e-mails and many more (Grede 2002). Advertising clutter is intensifying in each medium and it is not surprising that the vast amount of clutter has been identified as one of the leading problems for advertisers (Downey 2002). Advertisers strive to attract attention to their communication and to gain a competitive edge by distinguishing their product or service in the advertising cluttered market place.

One commonly used strategy to cut through the advertising clutter is to include celebrity endorsers in advertisements (Erdogan, Baker, and Tagg 2001). Leveraging endorsement of products by celebrities has an eminent history in marketing practice dating back to Josiah Wedgwood, an 18<sup>th</sup> Century potter who used royalty as celebrities to his advantage (Pringle 2004). Based on a recent estimate, approximately 25% of commercials use celebrity endorsers (Silvera and Cronley 2008). Therefore, celebrity endorsement advertising has become a feature of marketing practice (Biswas, Hussain, and O'Donnell 2009).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Celebrity Endorsement**

Extensive research has been carried out in regards to the universal phenomenon of celebrity endorsements and factors that influence the effectiveness of celebrity endorsed advertisements (Agrawal et al. 1995; Amos et al. 2008; Atkin and Block 1983; Baker and Churchill 1977; Biswas, Hussain, and O'Donnell 2009; Boyd and Shank 2004; Bush et al. 2004; Caballero et al. 1989; Caballero and Salomon 1984; Charbonneau and Garland 2005). Research relating to the issue of celebrity endorsements dates back to the 1970s (Baker and Churchill 1977; Friedman and Friedman 1979). However, limited research has been conducted on sports celebrity endorsements and their effectiveness in print advertisements (Braunstein and Zhang 2005; Kim and Na 2007; Koering and Boyd 2009; Shank 2002).

### **Definition of a Celebrity**

A number of definitions have been used in literature to define a celebrity. McCracken (1989, 310) states that a celebrity endorser is “any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement”.

### **Celebrity Attributes that Influence Endorsement Effectiveness**

Researchers have suggested that celebrities have attractive and likeable qualities (Atkin and Block 1983). Celebrity spokespeople can add value to the endorsed product due to a combination of physical attractiveness and their status in society (Friedman and Friedman 1979). Celebrity endorsers can transfer cultural meaning from the celebrity to the advertised product (McCracken 1986). Friedman and Friedman (1979) found that celebrity endorsers were most effective for products with high social or psychological risk, involving elements of good taste, self-image and opinion of others. Moreover, celebrity endorsers have been found to produce more positive responses towards advertising than non-celebrity endorsers (Atkin and Block 1983). Celebrities provide benefits that unknown endorsers cannot (Garland et al. 2006; Koering and Boyd 2009). Celebrities ‘cut through’ advertising clutter, hold viewer attention, contribute to brand name recognition and transfer positive qualities such as physical attractiveness and likeability to the brand (Charbonneau and Garland 2005; Ohanian 1991).

### **Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement in Advertising**

Celebrity endorsements have been extensively used by marketers to heighten the appeal of their advertisements. Celebrities are believed to enhance the subject’s attentiveness to the advertisement, make the copy more memorable, credible, desirable, and effectively glamorise the product (Spielman 1981). Research suggests that celebrity endorsement is justified as it can be an effective strategy to gain and hold consumer attention (Atkin and Block 1983; Agrawal et al. 1995; Erdogan and Zafer 1999), enhance message recall (Friedman and Friedman 1979), increase believability of the ads (Kamins et al. 1989), and create positive word mouth (Bush et al. 2004). Moreover, celebrities can help brand attitude (Friedman and Friedman 1979; Kamins et al. 1989; Petty et al. 1983), increase purchase likelihood (Friedman and Friedman 1979; Kamins 1989), and increase brand loyalty (Bush et al. 2004). Celebrities have been found to produce more positive responses toward advertising and greater purchase intentions than a non-celebrity endorser (Atkin and Block 1983; Petty et al.

1983). Furthermore, according to Atkin and Block (1983) advertisements with celebrities are rated as more interesting, stronger and more effective.

On the other hand, it has been suggested that there are decreasing economic returns associated with using celebrity endorsements, as costs associated with endorsing celebrities are increasing (Koering and Boyd 2009). A celebrity does not automatically guarantee the success of an advertisement (Kamins and Gupta 1994). Moreover, negative publicity may be associated with celebrities, and endorsing multiple products, or endorsing rival products may harm the brand (Agrawal et al. 1995; Tripp et al. 1994).

### **Celebrity Attributes that Influence Endorsement Effectiveness**

“Previous research examining the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement has focused primarily on personal attributes of the celebrity that enhance his or her persuasiveness” (Silvera and Austad 2004, 1511). Research has focused on source credibility (Hovland and Weiss 1951; Hovland et al. 1953), source attractiveness (McGuire 1985), meaning transfer (McCracken 1986) and product match-up hypothesis (Kamins and Gupta 1994).

### **Source Credibility Influence on Endorsement Effectiveness**

Source credibility is the extent to which the consumer sees the endorser as having relevant knowledge, skill or experience and trusts the source to give unbiased, objective information (Byrne et al. 2003).

Trustworthiness refers to the general believability of the endorser and, expertise refers to the product knowledge of the endorser which is linked with his/her claims regarding the product. Expertise is believed to be a factor that increases the persuasiveness effects of trustworthiness (Amos et al. 2008). According to Seno and Lukas (2007), consumers evaluate expertise and trustworthiness as the principal ingredients of celebrity credibility, which is reflected by the validity of the assertions made by the celebrity (expertise) and their confidence in the celebrity's intent to represent the most valid assertions (trustworthiness). Trustworthiness refers to the honesty, integrity, and believability of an endorser as perceived by the target audience; and expertise is defined as the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions (Erdogan et al. 2001). Attractiveness encompasses factors including similarity, familiarity, and likeability (Triandis 1971). Similarity is referred to the resemblance between the source (celebrity) and the receiver (consumer). Similarity arises through knowledge of the source via repeated exposure. Hence, celebrities have high familiarity power with consumers due to their exposure in different media. Likeability occurs from affection of consumers for the source due to their physical appearance, behaviour or other characteristics (Byrne et al. 2003). According to Kamin's (1989) two-sided study, a celebrity endorser was more likeable and believable than a non-celebrity. Source attractiveness leads to persuasion through identification, where the consumer adopts the beliefs, attitudes, preferences and behaviour of the celebrity as they are motivated to seek a relationship with the celebrity (Friedman and Friedman 1979). Celebrity attractiveness could be referred to as physical attractiveness as well as non-physical attributes such as the sportsmanship, charm, grace and intelligence of a sports celebrity (Seno and Lukas 2007). The more attractive the celebrity, the more brand's image benefits from the celebrity endorsement (Liu, et al. 2007).

### **Meaning Transfer Influence on Endorsement Effectiveness**

Source credibility is closely linked to meaning transfer theory which was introduced by McCracken (1986). The basic tenet of the theory is that a celebrity encodes a unique set of meanings which are transferred from the celebrity to the product and consumer (Kamins and Gupta 1994). The theory proposes that the higher the perceived match between symbolic properties of the product and the celebrity's meanings drawn from his/her assumed roles, the more likely consumers assign meaning to the celebrity and the brand (Biswas et al. 2009).

The meaning transfer theory suggests that celebrities develop a persona through the types of roles they play in society as well as how they are portrayed in the media. Society then assigns meaning to celebrities, in terms of what they represent according to consumer perceptions (Amos et al 2008).

### **Match-up Hypothesis Influence on Endorsement Effectiveness**

Match-up hypothesis is defined as the consistency between the characteristics of a celebrity endorser and the attributes of the product that they endorse (Misra and Beatty 1990). Celebrity/product fit or match-up hypothesis is thought to function as a key determinant of endorsement effectiveness (Friedman and Friedman 1979). The greater the perceived fit between the relevant product attributes and characteristics of the celebrity, the more quickly an associative link can be established between the two by consumers (Seno and Lukas 2007).

The perceived fit between the celebrity/product combination can be related to physical attractiveness, expertise or other highly relevant characteristics. Empirical studies of a single endorser have shown that endorser and product congruity positively affect consumers' perceptions of celebrity credibility, attitudes, recall, recognition, purchase intention, and willingness to pay higher prices (Kamins and Gupta 1994).

### **Sports Celebrity Endorsement**

A sports celebrity endorser is defined as a famous athlete or coach who uses public recognition to recommend or co-present with a product in an advertisement (Stafford et al. 2003). Athletes are participants who engage in organised training to develop skills in particular sports (Shank 2002).

Sport has transformed from mere games to professional entertainment and sports marketers have taken advantage of this trend as sports celebrity endorsements have increased (Braunstein and Zhang 2005). Nike has been the most ubiquitous marketer in the sports world, as it has attached itself with sports celebrities including Tiger Woods, Maria Sharapova, LeBron James, Derek Jeter and Ronaldo (Rose 2009). At the end of February 2008, Nike's endorsement commitments surged to \$3.4 billion according to their quarterly report filed with regulators for 2008 (Kaplan 2008).

Sport celebrities are not effective endorsers for companies and brands in all situations and across all product types (Badenhuasen 2009; Koering and Boyd 2009; Boyd and Shank 2004). Sport celebrity endorsers have been found to be especially effective when matched with products or services that are used in their particular sport (Boyd and Shank 2004; Charbonneau and Garland 2006; Peetz et al. 2004; Till 2001). In particular the match-up hypothesis explains how the congruence between the image of a celebrity and the image of a

brand results in more positive evaluations of the endorser, brand and advertisement (Till and Busler 2000). This relates to the match between brand and endorser attractiveness, expertise and other relevant characteristics.

### **Sports Celebrity Influence on Endorsement Effectiveness**

Sports celebrities become more attractive to the consumer when a similarity exists between the endorser and the consumer due to similarities a consumer can identify between themselves and an athlete (Shilbury et al. 1998). An attractive celebrity is likely to enhance effectiveness of endorser in an advertisement and create positive consumer attitudes due to the dual benefit of their sport celebrity status and attractiveness (Kamins 1990). Results of Liu et al. (2007) suggested that match-up between endorser and product was not as important as attractiveness. Unless the endorser's expertise level was high enough to make consumers' ignore physical appearance, attractiveness plays a major role towards creating positive brand attitudes and higher consumer purchase intentions.

“The match-up hypothesis suggests that an athlete would be ideally suited as an endorser for a brand related to athletics, but not for a non-sport related brand” (Koering and Boyd 2009, 30). Athletes would be perceived as more credible by consumers when endorsing a sport related brand as there is a direct link between the athlete expertise and the sport related brands. Evidence from the study conducted by Choi and Rifon (2007) suggested that a perceived match between a less-well known or even unknown athlete, and the brand was sufficient to obtain a positive response from respondents. Subjects reported higher purchase intentions for advertisements for sports brands that contained both the product and the athlete, even when the athletes had not gained fame.

### **Effects of Sports Celebrity Endorsement on Attitude towards the Product**

Research conducted by Kim and Na (2007), addressed the issue of the fit between the sports celebrity endorser and endorsed products being sports or non-sports related, influence on product attitudes. The study indicated that credibility and attractiveness were important when there was a congruent relationship between the sports celebrity endorser and endorsed product, whereas, only attractiveness was more important than credibility when the fit between the sports celebrity endorser and endorsed product was incongruent (Kim and Na 2007).

### **Research Gaps and Future Research Opportunities**

After carefully reviewing the relevant celebrity endorsement literature and in particular sport celebrity endorsement, a number of research gaps have been identified.

Sports celebrity endorsements need to be examined as they are not only used for sports products but also non-sport products. According to the match-up hypothesis, sports celebrities should not be used to endorse non-sport related products and services as the effectiveness would be limited (Till and Busler 2000). However, advertisers continue to use sports celebrity endorsements outside of their area of influence. Due to the high associated costs it is imperative that these factors are investigated (Koering and Boyd 2009). According to Kamins (1990), an endorser will not have a positive effect on consumer attitudes and behaviour unless the image of the endorser is congruent with the image of the brand.

This study replicates the Silvera and Austad (2004) study. Although frequently used to endorse non-sport brands, the circumstances under which an athlete is effective as an expert endorser have not been fully explored (Boyd and Shank 2004). This study investigates endorser effectiveness according to the match-up hypothesis effect, which has not been extensively investigated in the area of sport marketing and the impact of celebrity athlete endorsers. Hence, opportunities exist in terms of examining the role of attractiveness, credibility and congruence of sports celebrity endorsers in the evaluation of products where there is a fit between the endorser and the endorsed product. Moreover, although limited research has been done with athletes endorsing sports and non-sports related products; the product categories have not been vastly different (Koering and Boyd 2009).

There is a lack of research regarding the topic of celebrity endorsement in an Australian context. This study replicates Silvera and Austad (2004) in an Australian context with an expert endorser. Attention to the domain of research would be important in Australia, given the importance of sport (ABS 2008; Chappell 2004).

### **Objectives of the Study**

The effectiveness of sports celebrities endorsing sports and non-sports brands has not been extensively researched (Liu et al. 2007). Research has been conducted on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements on advertisements and the benefits to brand managers and businesses. This research investigates advertising effectiveness of a sports celebrity endorsing sports and non-sports brands. The objective of this study is to determine the factors predicting the effectiveness of sports celebrity endorsement advertisements.

### **Research Questions**

After careful analysis and investigation of the literature, this research aims to address the following questions:

- Are sports celebrities effective for all brands in all situations?
- Do consumers' inferences regarding the endorser affect attitudes towards the brand?
- Do factors such as endorser attractiveness and, attitude toward the endorser affect attitudes towards the advertisement and the brand?

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

Four core theories underpin the development of hypotheses for this research. These are source attractiveness theory, source credibility theory, meaning transfer theory and match-up hypothesis theory. Underlying related theories such as schema congruity theory, balance theory and social influence theory have also been employed in the proposed conceptual model. These theories have been used to establish factors that predict sports celebrity endorsement effectiveness in advertisements in regards to sports and non-sports products as well as consumers attitudes towards the endorser, advertisement and ultimately the brand (Braunstein and Zhang 2005; Kim and Na 2007; Koering and Boyd 2009; Liu et al. 2007).

### **Source Attractiveness Theory Influence on Effectiveness of Advertisements**

Attractiveness could include physical beauty and non-physical beauty such as sportsmanship, charm, grace and intelligence (Seno and Lukas 2007). Researchers have emphasised the importance of source attractiveness in determining the liking for the endorser and thereby increasing endorsement effectiveness (Friedman and Friedman 1979). The tenets of source attractiveness play an important role and application in celebrity endorsement (Caballero and Salomon 1984; Charbonneau and Garland 2005; Kahle and Homer 1985; Koering and Boyd 2009; Lear et al. 2009; Liu et al. 2007; Till and Busler 2000).

According to source attractiveness theory, celebrity attractiveness leads to persuasion through identification, where the consumer adopts the beliefs, attitudes, preferences and behaviour of the celebrity as they are motivated to seek a relationship with the celebrity (Friedman and Friedman 1979). The theory suggests that a consumer is more likely to adopt an attitude or behaviour of a celebrity if he/she identifies with the celebrity (Kelman 1961).

It is expected that an attractive sports celebrity is likely to be an especially effective source of consumer attitude due to the dual benefit of their sport celebrity status and attractiveness (Kamins 1990). Therefore, the more attractive the sports celebrity, the more the endorsed brand's image benefits from the sports celebrity endorsement (Kim and Na 2007). The theory proposes that consumers form a positive perception of an advertisement, sports celebrity and brand when the sports celebrity is familiar and likeable. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H<sub>1a</sub>: Attractiveness will be positively associated with correspondent inferences which will have an indirect positive effect on attitudes toward brand image

H<sub>1b</sub>: Attractiveness will be positively associated with attitude toward the endorser

### **Source Credibility Theory Influence on Effectiveness of Advertisements**

The source credibility theory has its roots in social psychology proposed by Hovland and Weiss (1951). The theory is defined as a communicator's positive characteristics that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message (Ohanian 1990). The focal premise of the theory is that the acceptance of an advertising message depends on the quality of the endorser. The basic tenets of the theory include endorser expertise and trustworthiness.

Social influence theory also plays an underlying role in source credibility theory. According to source credibility theory, celebrity credibility leads to persuasion through internalization, where the consumer conforms to the attitude or behaviour advocated by a celebrity because they believe in the substance of celebrity attitude or behaviour (Friedman and Friedman 1979). According to the internalization process, persuasion through source credibility occurs as an individual accepts influence because the induced behaviour is congruent with his/her value system (Kelman 1961). If consumers find the credibility including trustworthiness and expertness of the source acceptable, they will accept the message as accurate and integrate the message with their beliefs. Consequently, the message is internalized as consumers accept the influence because it provides a solution to a problem and is 'demanded' by their own values (Friedman and Friedman 1979).

The use of a sports celebrity is predicted to be positively associated with attitudes toward the sport related product, and consequently the brand. In this study, *correspondent inferences* is



the mediating variable that accounts for the relation between the predictor (attractiveness) and the criterion (attitude toward the endorser). The variable explains how external physical events take on internal psychological significance (Baron and Kenny 1986; Silvera and Austad 2004). A mediating variable represents the “generative mechanism through which the focal independent variable (endorser attractiveness) is able to influence the dependent variable (attitude toward the endorser) of interest” (Baron and Kenny 1986, 1173). The following hypothesis leads on from the theories outlined:

H<sub>2a</sub>: Correspondent Inferences will be positively associated with attitude toward the endorser

H<sub>2b</sub>: Correspondent Inferences will mediate the relationship between endorser attractiveness and attitude toward the endorser

### **Meaning Transfer and Match-up Hypothesis Theory**

Meaning transfer theory by McCracken (1989) aids in providing an explanation why a celebrity is or is not compatible with a particular product category (Friedman and Friedman 1979). The meaning transfer theory (McCracken 1989) proposes that celebrities stand for a unique set of meanings to the consumer. There is a transfer of meaning from celebrity to product and eventually to the consumer. The theory proposes that the higher the perceived match between symbolic properties of the product and the celebrity’s meanings drawn from his/her assumed roles, the more likely consumers are to assign meaning to the celebrity and the brand (Biswas et al. 2009). The meaning transfer theory suggests that celebrities develop a persona through the types of roles they play in society as well as how they are portrayed in the media. Society then assigns meaning to celebrities (Amos et al. 2008). When a celebrity is paired with a brand, the endorser’s image helps shape the image of that brand in the mind of the consumers (Agrawal et al. 1995).

Another important theory in celebrity endorsement is the match-up hypothesis theory developed by Kamins (1990). This theory proposes that an endorsement will be more credible and will enhance the image of the product if there is a perceived ‘fit’ between the product attributes and the characteristics of the celebrity. The match-up hypothesis also refers to the consistency between the characteristics of a celebrity endorser and the attributes of the product they endorse (Misra and Beatty 1990).

The match-up hypothesis theory is underpinned by balance theory and schema theory (De Souza, et al. 2005). Both theories have an important role to play in celebrity endorsement effectiveness. The schema congruity theory offers insight into how the match-up process works. A schema is the organised structure of associations and expectations an individual has for a given domain, which may include a sport or product (Bettman 1979). The structure of a schema organises the consumer’s evaluation of stimuli. In regards to celebrity endorsement, schema congruity occurs when the image of an endorser and the image of the product are relevant to consumers, as a relationship between them can be readily addressed within the existing celebrity and/or product category schemas (Lee and Thorson 2008). Schema congruity theory proposes that consumers are likely to engage in fewer thoughts about the advertisement as the advertisement already fits an existing schema when a match between brand and endorser is present. As a result, consumers are more likely to accept the advertisement and its message. However, when there is a lack of match and a credibility gap between the endorser and product, consumers engage in more elaboration about the advertisement in an attempt to resolve the inconsistencies perceived by the consumers.

Therefore, this may result in negative reactions and attitudes due to perceived inconsistency (Koering and Boyd 2009).

According to the schema congruity theory, if the spokesperson is an athlete then the athlete's sport should be an important component of the spokesperson's schema. For this research it was predicted that the sports celebrity endorsing sports related products would successfully be able to display the similarity link between the product and celebrity. Thus, the personality of the celebrity will be transferred to the product. Leading from the theories the following hypotheses have been developed:

H<sub>3</sub>: Attitude toward the endorser will be positively associated with attitude toward the advertisement

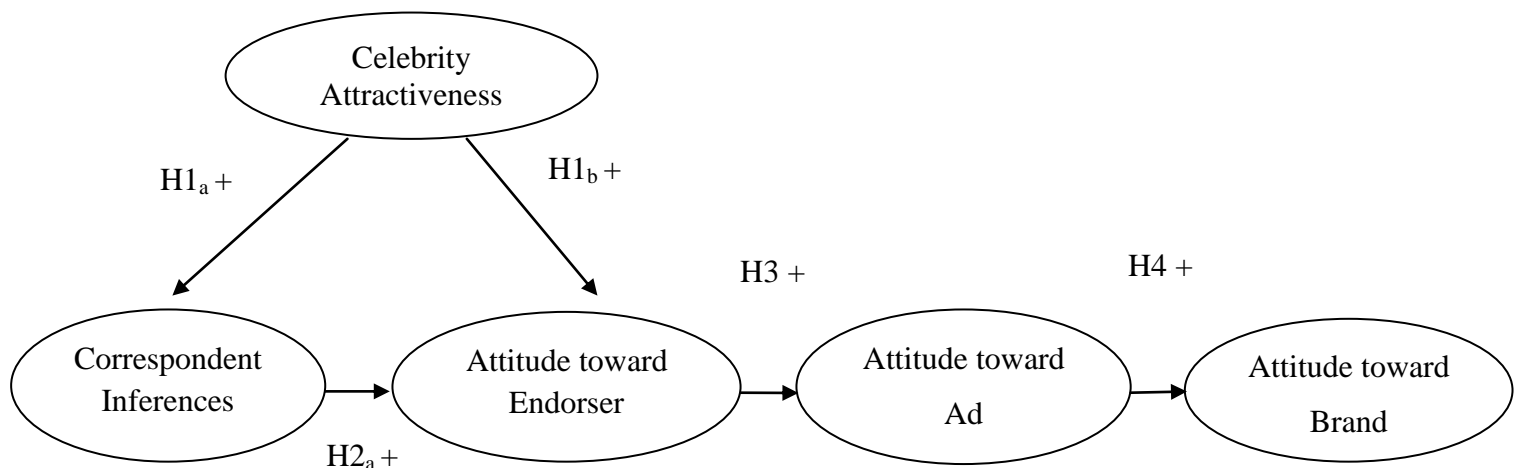
H<sub>4</sub>: Attitude toward the advertisement will be positively associated with attitude toward the brand

H<sub>5</sub>: Advertisement with sports celebrity endorsing sports related products will produce more favourable attitudes towards the advertisement and brand compared to sports celebrity endorsing non-sports related product

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework has been developed after careful review of the literature. Key constructs have been defined and underlying theories have been examined in order to form hypotheses. This research hypothesises the role of celebrity attractiveness, correspondent inferences, effectiveness of product type and consumer attitudes in predicting attitudes towards the endorser, advertisement, and brand. The model for this study is adapted from the original study of Silvera and Austad (2004). The conceptual framework for the research is depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Model predicting attitude toward the advertised product**



## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

A mixed mode convenience sample was drawn including mall-intercept and student sample as means of convenience sampling. A total of 270 self-administered questionnaires were distributed to voluntary participants in universities and shopping malls. Questionnaires with missing data or insufficient responses to particular sections were eliminated and not used for statistical analysis purposes. As a result, a total of 240 questionnaires were useable and valid for analysis. The total response rate was 89% including 140 male (58.3%) and 100 (41.7%) female. A total of 97 self-administered questionnaires were conducted with mall-intercept respondents and 143 with undergraduate university students in Western Australia across different disciplines including Information Technology, Marketing and Legal Studies.

The replicated study (Silvera and Austad 2004) also used a student sample. However, this study has extended the sample by further utilizing a mall-intercept sampling method. Students have been used as surrogates of other populations in past research and results have suggested that attitudinal measures possess criterion validity and that the attitude-preference relationships are similar between student and adult samples (Lynch 1982; McGrath and Brinberg 1983).

Shopping malls draw a substantial number of consumers who treat shopping as a form of entertainment or recreation. According to Norton (2005) shoppers in shopping malls are representative of the general population and view mall intercepts as a preferred method of sampling.

### **Focus Group and Pre-test to Develop Questionnaire**

A focus group of 15 participants, including 8 females and 7 males was conducted in order to determine appropriate Australian sports celebrity endorser. The pre-test was conducted to select an appropriate sports celebrity to be included in the self-administered questionnaire for the print advertisements. Participants were asked to name Australian athletes that were top-of-mind. The focus group generated a list of athletes' names and the most frequently named athlete, Michael Clarke, was selected as the most suitable celebrity endorser. Michael Clarke, the Vice-Captain of the Australian cricket team was therefore, selected as the sports celebrity endorser for the current research. Michael Clarke began endorsing brands such as Victoria Beer, Gillette, Bonds and Slazenger in 2009, creating a current well-recognised and familiar name as extensively used in the media. In early 2009 Michael Clarke was placed alongside Roger Federer and Tiger Woods as the to promote Gillette (McLeman 2009). Michael Clarke is the "epitome of the modern-day super sports star" (Smith 2009, 16).

Furthermore, a pre-test was conducted to confirm the questionnaire, which was adapted from Silvera and Austad (2004), with Michael Clarke as the sports celebrity endorser. This was done to uncover any problems with the questionnaire before full-scale use, and to ensure that the questionnaire met research expectations (Aaker et al. 2005). The pre-test reviewed the time to complete the questionnaire, the flow and appropriateness of questions. As a result of the pre-test, a question relating to celebrity attractiveness was altered from the original study of Silvera and Austad (2004). One question on how similar consumers perceived the

endorser to themselves was restricted to male respondents, since females could not compare a male to themselves.

### **Procedure and Stimulus Material of the Study**

Two print advertisements featuring Michael Clarke were selected to determine his effectiveness in endorsing a sports brand, Slazenger and non-sports brand, Bonds underwear. A self-administered questionnaire began with a filter question to establish the respondent's knowledge of Michael Clarke's identity. The filter question was included to establish if a difference in attitudes towards the endorser, advertisement or brand existed when a respondent recognised or did not recognise the endorser. Michael Clarke's profile was supplied for those who could not correctly identify him.

Subsequently, two colour print advertisements were presented as stimulus material in the questionnaire, with Michael Clarke endorsing Slazenger sports equipment and, Michael Clarke endorsing Bonds underwear. Consequently, questions were posed regarding the print advertisements to ascertain sports celebrity attractiveness, correspondent inferences, and consumer attitudes towards the endorser, product, brand and advertisement.

### **Measures for the Self-administered Questionnaire**

Scales for the questionnaire were adapted from Silvera and Austad's (2004) study. However, additional questions were inserted and a scale measuring purchase intention was included (Busler and Till 2001). Purchase intention was included as a component in the questionnaire to determine if any differences this measure across the advertising messages.

Each of the items were answered on an 11-point scale (numerical scale) ranging from 0 = "Not at all likely" to 10 = "Extremely likely". Correspondent inferences were measured as a direct measure to determine the sports celebrity's credibility in the specific context of the advertisement, and to link to consumer's attitudes toward the advertised product.

All attitude items included semantic differential scales with a value of '1' associated with the negative word and a value of '7' associated with the positive word. Consumer attitude toward the advertisement and attitude toward the endorser were measured using bipolar descriptions, being pleasant/unpleasant, likeable/not likeable, interesting/uninteresting, and good/bad.

Consumer attitude toward the product was measured using the items, desirable/not desirable, pleasant/unpleasant, likeable/not likeable, good/bad. Attitude toward the endorser was measured using the items, interesting/uninteresting, pleasant/unpleasant, likeable/not likeable, good/bad.

Participants were also asked to rate Michael Clarke's knowledge of the product domain, similarity to themselves, and physical attractiveness, to measure the independent variable of attractiveness of the endorser. All of these ratings were presented on a 7-point scale, where 1 indicated low values (e.g. "not at all attractive") and 7 indicated high values (e.g. "very attractive").

### **Statistical Analysis of the Data**

A linear regression analysis was used to hypothesize the effects of the independent variable (attractiveness) on corresponding dependent variables. Regression analysis is used to determine whether and how a given variable is related to another variable or variables (Sekaran 2003). Furthermore, mediation analysis was used to determine whether the mediating variable, correspondent inferences had a partial or full mediating effect between Attractiveness and Attitude toward the Endorser. To facilitate the difference of respondent attitudes toward Michael Clarke endorsing sports products and non-sports products, a paired sample t-test was utilized.

## **DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Scale Reliability of the Measures Used in the Study**

Reliability tests were conducted on all variables to confirm the internal consistency and reliability of the measures used in this study. Internal reliability tests using cronbach's alpha scores were conducted for scales used in the study for both print advertisements. Cronbach's alpha values were all above 0.8, indicating highly acceptable levels of reliability (Sekaran 2003) and no scale items were deleted.

### **Testing Hypotheses for Slazenger and Bonds Advertisements**

The first hypothesis  $H_{1a}$ , states that Attractiveness is positively associated with correspondent inferences". The results generated for hypothesis  $H_{1a}$ , revealed an  $R^2$  value of .204 with an adjusted  $R^2$  value of .199 for the Slazenger advertisement. The  $R^2$  value indicates that endorser attractiveness accounts for approximately 20% of the variance in correspondent inferences. For the Bonds advertisement, results generated for hypothesis  $H_{1a}$ , revealed an  $R^2$  value of .397 with an adjusted  $R^2$  value of .393. In this case, the  $R^2$  value indicates that endorser attractiveness accounts for approximately 40% of the variance on correspondent inferences.

Hypothesis  $H_{1b}$  states that attractiveness is positively associated with attitude toward the endorser. The results generated for hypothesis  $H_{1b}$ , revealed an  $R^2$  value of .307 with an adjusted  $R^2$  value of .303 for the Slazenger advertisement. Similarly, results generated for hypothesis, revealed an  $R^2$  value of .319 with an adjusted  $R^2$  value of .312 for the Bonds advertisement. Therefore,  $H_{1b}$ , is accepted for both advertisements. The significant results for both advertisements confirm the Silvera and Austad (2004) findings.

Hypothesis  $H_{2a}$  states that correspondent inferences will be positively associated with attitude toward the endorser. The results generated for hypothesis  $H_{2a}$ , revealed an  $R^2$  value of .161 with an adjusted  $R^2$  value of .157 for the Slazenger advertisement and an  $R^2$  value of .252 with an adjusted  $R^2$  value of .246 for the Bonds advertisement. Results suggest that both variables had a significant relationship as  $p < 0.05$ , and that correspondent inferences had a positive effect on attitude toward the endorser.  $H_{2a}$  is accepted for both advertisements.

H<sub>3</sub> states that attitude toward the endorser will be positively associated with attitude toward the advertisement. The results generated for hypothesis H<sub>3</sub>, reveal an R<sup>2</sup> value of .614 with an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value of .612 for the Slazenger advertisement and an R<sup>2</sup> value of .796 with an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value of .795 for the Bonds advertisement. The results for both advertisements reflect those of Silvera and Austad (2004) who reported an R<sup>2</sup> value of .59. Furthermore, results suggested that both variables had a significant relationship as p<0.05, and that attitude toward the endorser had a positive effect on attitude toward the advertisement. As a result, H<sub>3</sub> is accepted for both advertisements. These results support the studies of Braunstein and Zhang (2005), Kim and Na (2007), Koering and Boyd (2009), Lee and Thorson (2008), and Silvera and Austad (2004).

H<sub>4</sub> states that attitude toward the advertisement will be positively associated with attitude toward the brand. The results reveal an R<sup>2</sup> value of .512 with an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value of .510 for the Slazenger advertisement and an R<sup>2</sup> value of .399 with an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value of .396 for the Bonds advertisement. The results for both advertisements confirm the findings in the Silvera and Austad (2004) study which generated an R<sup>2</sup> value of .72. Furthermore, results suggested that both variables had a significant relationship as p<0.05, and that attitude toward the advertisement had a positive effect on attitude toward the brand. As a result, H<sub>4</sub> is accepted for both advertisements. The results support those of Baker and Churchill (1977), Biswas et al. (2009), Boyd and Shank (2004), Byrne et al. (2003), Friedman and Friedman (1979), Silvera and Austad (2004), Kim and Na (2007) and Koering and Boyd (2009).

**Table 1: Linear Regression Summary of Results**

Hypothesis	Standard Error	Parameter Estimate (Beta Value)	t-statistic	R squared	Adjusted R squared	p-value
H <sub>1a</sub> Slazenger	.142	.452	6.118	.204	.199	.000
H <sub>1a</sub> Bonds	.118	.630	10.096	.397	.393	.000
H <sub>1b</sub> Slazenger	.067	.554	8.048	.307	.303	.000
H <sub>1b</sub> Bonds	.097	.565	6.636	.319	.312	.000
H <sub>2a</sub> Slazenger	.031	.401	6.753	.161	.157	.000
H <sub>2a</sub> Bonds	.048	.502	6.438	.252	.246	.000
H <sub>3</sub> Slazenger	.039	.783	19.404	.614	.612	.000
H <sub>3</sub> Bonds	.041	.892	21.920	.796	.795	.000
H <sub>4</sub> Slazenger	.044	.716	15.784	.512	.510	.000
H <sub>4</sub> Bonds	.047	.632	12.565	.399	.396	.000

### **Mediation Analysis to Test Hypothesis H<sub>2b</sub>**

Mediation analysis was carried out to test whether correspondent inferences mediate the relationship between endorser attractiveness and attitude toward the endorser. According to Baron and Kenny (1986, 1172), a “mediator function is of a third variable, which represents the generative mechanism through which the focal independent variable is able to influence the dependent variable of interest and accounts for the relation between the predictor and the criterion”. Furthermore, Baron and Kenny (1986) state that mediators explain how external physical events take on internal psychological significance and address the reason of how or why such effects occur.

To establish mediation, Baron and Kenny (1986) specified four conditions among the predictors, the mediator, and the criterion variables (Youn 2009). Firstly, the predictors must be significantly related to the mediator. The findings indicated such a relationship for both advertisements. Endorser attractiveness was significantly related to correspondent inferences. Secondly, the predictors must be significantly associated with criterion variables. The findings showed that endorser attractiveness was significantly related to attitude toward endorser for both advertisements. Thirdly, the mediator must significantly affect the criterion variables. The results established this result, revealing that correspondent inferences had a significant effect on attitude toward endorser for both advertisements. Lastly, effects of the predictors on the criterion variables must be less when the mediator is included. As a result, the regression coefficients of the predictors should be reduced in the fourth step when compared with those in the second step. The comparison of regression coefficients of the predictors indicated that the effects of endorser attractiveness were considerably reduced given the presence of correspondent inferences.

Thus, correspondent inferences partially mediated the effects of endorser attractiveness and attitude toward endorser for both advertisements (Holmbeck 2002). Furthermore, in order to confirm the mediating variable as a partial or full mediator a sobel test was conducted to determine whether a mediator carries the influence of an independent variable or dependent variable (Preacher and Leonardelli 2008). A Sobel test for both advertisements confirmed correspondent inferences as a partial mediator and the results for both advertisements are displayed in Table 2.

**Table 2**

**Sobel Test for Slazenger and Bonds Advertisements**

	<b>Slazenger Advertisement</b>	<b>Bonds Advertisement</b>
<b>t-statistic</b>	3.537274	6.058537
<b>p-value</b>	0.000202	0

### Paired Sample t-test to Test H<sub>5</sub>

Paired sample t-test was carried out to test H<sub>5</sub> which states that the advertisement with the sports celebrity endorsing sports related products (Slazenger) will produce more favourable attitudes towards the advertisement and brand compared to sports celebrity endorsing non-sports related product (Bonds).

A paired sample t-test was used to test H<sub>5</sub> (Kim and Na 2007; Silvera and Austad 2004). The results affirm that the Slazenger advertisement produces more favourable attitudes towards the advertisement and brand compared to Bonds advertisement. However, the t-test revealed that there are no significant differences between the attitudes and correspondent inferences towards both advertisements. However, there was a significant difference in Endorser Attractiveness across both advertisements. The mean score for endorser attractiveness for the Slazenger advertisement (M = 4.21) significantly exceeded the mean (M= 4.01) for the Bonds advertisement ( p < 0.05). Since the mean scores for attitude toward the brand for both advertisements were not significantly different (p>0.5), H<sub>5</sub> is rejected.

**Table 3**

**Paired sample t-test for Slazenger and Bonds Advertisement s**

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-statistic	p-value (two-tailed)
Endorser Attractiveness Slazenger	4.2192	1.27723	.10570	2.656	<b>.009</b>
Endorser Attractiveness Bonds	4.0137	1.29773	.10740		
Correspondent Inferences Slazenger	5.83	2.468	.159	-.964	.336
Correspondent Inferences Bonds	6.00	2.339	.151		
Attitude toward endorser Slazenger	4.6880	1.26070	.11276	1.942	.054
Attitude toward endorser Bonds	4.4740	1.49016	.13328		
Attitude toward Slazenger ad	4.4801	1.23770	.08006	.075	.941
Attitude toward Bonds ad	4.4738	1.33122	.08611		
Attitude toward Slazenger brand	4.5594	1.21159	.07821	-1.965	.051
Attitude toward Bonds brand	4.7250	1.23787	.07990		

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

### Conceptual Contributions of the Study

This research is a partial replication and extension of the Silvera and Austad (2004) study conducted in Norway. Replication assists in assessing validity, reliability and generalizability which is important for the advancement of science (Hubbard and Armstrong 1994). This study is significant for the area of research of celebrity endorsement as replications with extensions serve the function of assessing whether outcomes can be generalized beyond the original context.

This study provides valuable insights through findings that contribute to the literature of sports celebrity endorsement. The results provide further insight into the match-up



hypothesis of sports celebrity endorsement by investigating the effectiveness of a sports celebrity endorsing a sport and non-sports brands. Sports celebrity endorsers are of particular interest as they are not used to endorse sports brands but also non-sport brands. The high costs of using sports celebrity endorsers warrants research in the area (Rose 2009).

The major contribution of this study lies in its investigation of the impact of product-type of sports or non-sports related brands endorsed by a sports celebrity. In past studies, product categories under investigation have not been varied (Koering and Boyd 2009). This study indicates that there are no significant differences in attitude towards the ad or the brand when a celebrity endorser promotes a product that matches or does not match his celebrity profile. This finding proposes that as long as a link is established between the product and endorser, consumers' evaluations of the advertisement and brand will be enhanced. This view is supported by Lee and Thorson (2008).

This study is one of the first to examine the factors that affect sports celebrity endorsement in an Australian context. The, original Norwegian study by Silvera and Austad (2004) used print advertisements featuring Hollywood celebrities. This research attempts to provide a significant contribution by tailoring it to the Australian population and using a local sports celebrity.

The current study also adopted correspondent inference to extend the conceptual model taken from Silvera and Austad (2004). Correspondent inferences played a partially mediating role in consumers attitudes toward the sports related and non-sports related brand. Therefore, this study concludes that although attractiveness of the celebrity is important as found in past research; correspondent inferences also play a role in consumers' attitudes towards products and brands (Caballero et al. 1989; Friedman and Friedman 1979; Ohanian 1991).

### **Methodological Contributions of the Study**

Research has been conducted in the area of sports celebrity endorsement. However, most research is based on experimental manipulation (Kim and Na 2007; Koering and Boyd 2009; Lee and Thorson 2008; Liu et al. 2007). This research however, uses a survey approach, specifically a self-completion questionnaire which eliminates interviewer bias and allows for a relatively large sample to be included into the study.

Additionally, past research is based primarily on student samples only (Friedman and Friedman 1979; Kahle and Homer 1985; Um 2008; Wood and Herbst 2007). This research presents a more diverse sample that includes both students and shoppers.

An additional methodological contribution of the study was the inclusion of a mediated variable into the study. Correspondent inference was introduced into the conceptual model to investigate its mediating effect.

### **Managerial Implications of the Study**

The study has many key managerial contributions which are focal to advertising and especially to the advancing attention to sports celebrity endorsement (Pringle 2004). From a managerial perspective, the findings allow advertisers and businesses to make better decisions when using sports celebrities to endorse products and brands.

Businesses spend millions of dollars in endorsements deals each year to associate some of the biggest names in sport with their products or services (Rose 2009). Moreover, sports celebrities are demanding increasingly large sums of money to lend their name and image to products (Madkour 2002). The main objectives for companies who use sports celebrity endorsers are to give the message credibility, capture the attention of consumers, increase product attractiveness, strengthen the recall of the brand name, reinforce the image of their product or service, increase liking of the ad and ultimately increase the potential of purchase. The variables investigated in this study will assist companies in making more informed decisions. If particular importance to practitioners is the affirmation of the power of celebrity to positive impact advertising and brand attitudes. Advertisers promoting sports and non-sports products should ensure that highly attractive sports celebrities are chosen with proven athletic abilities. Moreover, the study indicates that sports celebrities can influence consumers even when they promote non-sporting products.

### **Limitations of the Study and Future Research Directions**

Limitations to this study include the convenience sample, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other populations (Lynch 1982). Moreover, the research was limited to a single athlete. Greater external validity would result across a greater diversity of celebrity endorsers, including those engaged in sports other than cricket and across different demographic profiles.

Moreover, the study investigates sports celebrity effectiveness presented via print advertisements. Other media channels could also be explored. The use of pre-existing brands may cause response bias. Furthermore, the study is restricted to two product categories and the findings may have differed across other categories. Michael Clarke may be featured in a more diverse range of products that he currently promotes such as Gillette, Milo and Victoria beer advertisements.

In future research, television, radio and advertising media other than print may be investigated. Pre-existing brands used in this study may have caused respondent bias and may be eliminated through the use of fictional brand names. Finally, future research may focus on measuring sports celebrity endorsement effectiveness across a more extensive product range and within a broader range of markets.

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