

CORRESPONDING AUTHORS for

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Elif AKAGUN ERGIN, Ph.D.

Instructor of Marketing

Department of Management

Cankaya University

ANKARA 06530

TURKEY

Phone: 00(90)(312)284-4500 ext. 175

Fax: 00(90)(312)286-4873

E-mail: elifrutgers@yahoo.com

Handan OZDEMIR AKBAY, Ph.D.

Instructor of Marketing

Department of Management

Cankaya University

ANKARA 06530

TURKEY

Phone: 00(90)(312)284-4500 ext. 230

Fax: 00(90)(312)286-4873

E-mail: handanozdemir@hotmail.com

The Effects of Single vs. Multiple Celebrity Endorsements Towards Consumers' Purchase Intentions

Elif AKAGUN ERGIN, Çankaya University, Ankara, Turkey
(elifrutgers@yahoo.com)

Handan OZDEMIR AKBAY, Çankaya University, Ankara,
Turkey (handanozdemir@hotmail.com)

ABSTRACT

The aim of the current study was to explore consumers' potential gender-based differences in attitudes and behavior towards brand when exposed to ads featuring single vs. multiple celebrity endorsements. The study was based on an empirical research approach, which used a convenience sample of 385 young adult consumers. An 18-question survey and a twelve media print ads were utilized as a stimulus. Out of these twelve ads, seven contained a single celebrity endorsement whereas the remaining five had multiple celebrity endorsement. The results indicated partial support for six hypotheses, regarding differential attitudinal response by male and female consumers toward single or multiple celebrity ads. The implications of the study results as well as limitations and possible future research options are discussed.

KEYWORDS: Consumer attitudes, celebrity endorsements, gender effects

1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

Portrayal of celebrities in advertising is significantly increasing. On the other hand, consumers around the globe are becoming more sophisticated, demanding and fickle. Therefore, in today's media-driven markets, most companies rely heavily on creative advertising efforts to promote their products and services to their consumers. Celebrities (actors, athletes, artists, singers, etc..) are widely used in advertising to influence consumers' brand choice attitude and behavior. Pervasiveness of celebrity endorsements is evident in advertising, as a source of marketing message to promote a variety of products and services.

A celebrity endorser is an individual who is known to the public for his or her achievements in areas other than that of the product class endorsed (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). By the same token, a celebrity endorser is a person who enjoys recognition by public and uses this recognition on behalf of a product by appearing in an ad with that product (McCracken,

1989). According to a research by Ohanian (1991), celebrities enhance the value of the product advertised and have a positive effect on both attitude toward the ad and the brand.

The most important parameter that defines the success of a celebrity endorsement is the credibility of the celebrity. The two prominent dimensions that define credibility are trustworthiness and expertise with regard to the advertised product or service. A celebrity needs to instill the element of believability in the ad so that the consumer not only listens to but also gets actively engaged in a purchase.

To create a positive impact on the target audience, familiarity and likeability parameters are also critical in selecting the right celebrity as an endorser (Knott & James, 2004). Celebrities must be able to produce a sincere and positive perception for the consumers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Celebrities enjoy high public recognition and often have powerful influence upon endorsing products. They help increase awareness of advertised brands and create positive feelings towards them (Solomon, 2002). The power of celebrity endorsement stems from three aspects, including attention, credibility and persuasion (Fraser & Brown, 2002). Attention makes it possible to break through the advertising clutter and make the endorsed brand more noticeable to target audience. Credibility conveys a sense of trust for endorsed brands. Persuasion send a persuasive message to target audience to adopt the endorsed brand.

The issue of celebrity endorsement in advertising has received a significant attention in the literature. Many studies showed strong support for the use of celebrity endorsements. Some studies have explored factors related to the impact of using celebrities as product endorsers. Research evidence revealed that the perceived image of celebrity endorsers had a positive impact on product buying behavior (Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell, 2000; Ohanian, 1990). Hoffner and Cantor (1991) stated that people emulate the appearance and behavior of media celebrities they admired.

Frazer and Brown (2002) investigated how audience members identified with celebrities. They reported that people selectively integrate the perceived values and behaviors they saw in their favorite celebrities and adopted them into their own lives. Boyd and Shank (2004) investigated the effects of gender matching between consumers and sports celebrity endorsers in an effort to determine whether this would affect consumers' perceptions of the

attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise of the celebrity. They reported a significant interaction on trustworthiness but no significant effect on attractiveness or expertise.

Multiple celebrity endorsement, formerly a new phenomenon, is becoming more and more widespread in advertising. When more than one celebrity is used as an endorser in a single ad, this is known as multiple celebrity endorsement. As Saleem (2007) points out, multiple celebrities can have a positive impact on attitude toward ad, attitude toward brand and purchase intentions. Saleem (2007) also stated that multiple celebrity endorsements are much more effective for low involvement products ads.

Another major issue to consider is the need to create a match between the profession and/or persona of the celebrity and the characteristics of the brand he/she endorses. This will help with the involvement process for the consumer. As Petty & Cacioppo (1980) state, involvement enhances both the recall of the product and the brand. The fit factor is also prominent and crucial for multiple celebrity endorsements (Hus and McDonald, 2002).

Due to the complexity of consumer buying behavior, it is quite difficult to identify an optimal advertising strategy that is universally effective. However, portrayal of celebrities is rapidly increasing in television and print ads and most firms follow suit by developing their advertising strategies accordingly.

Using a celebrity for endorsing a brand has become a popular trend in Turkey. Many companies in the market have adopted this universal trend of using celebrities in their ads. The relationship between consumers' responses to celebrity endorsements and how these endorsements shape their attitude and behavior toward those particular brands must be examined. The primary concern of this research is to measure the perceptual differences about single vs. multiple celebrity ads with between male and female consumers. To measure the difference of perception, the variables for purchase intentions along with attitude toward ad, and attitude toward brand were explored.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the current research issue, given the findings indicated in the literature, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H 1: There is a significant difference between a consumer's gender and his purchase intention with respect to single celebrity ads.

H 2: There is a significant difference between a consumer's gender and his purchase intention with respect to multiple celebrity ads.

H 3: There is a significant difference between a consumer's gender and his attitude toward ad with respect to single celebrity ads.

H 4: There is a significant difference between a consumer's gender and his attitude toward ad with respect to multiple celebrity ads.

H 5: There is a significant difference between a consumer's gender and his attitude toward brand with respect to single celebrity ads.

H 6: There is a significant difference between a consumer's gender and his attitude toward brand with respect to multiple celebrity ads.

3. METHOD

3.1. SAMPLE AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is based on field work and it took place in Ankara, the capital city of Turkey with the participation of 385 young adult consumers. The research was conducted using a combination of a survey and a set of print ads. All of the respondents in the study were 18 years or older. The data collection team used a mall-intercept approach, consumers who showed an interest to participate in the study were selected. The consumers were briefed about the purpose of the study prior to filling out the surveys. Surveys were conducted at four selected shopping malls in a large metropolitan area. Each respondent was provided with all twelve of the print ads in addition to the survey sheets. To avoid systematic biases, recruiters paid attention to selection criteria based on cross-cultural balance, gender, age distribution, day of week, and time of day. After the process of data editing, the usable sample was 342 respondents.

The surveys were composed of eighteen questions and twelve print media ads containing single and multiple celebrity endorsements. Twelve print media ads were selected based on the number of celebrities in them. Out of these twelve print ads, seven had a single celebrity in them, whereas the remaining five ads contained three or more celebrities. All of these print ads were from consumer goods and all of the celebrities involved in the ads used in the study were Turkish. The only exception is the Adidas ad with an American basketball player. Out of the five multiple-celebrity ads, the first one was Turkish National Soccer

Team's Nike ad with the "just do it" theme. The second ad belonged to TNet Wi-Fi Internet Service provider featuring a well-liked male singer and a female actress. The third ad was for Procter & Gamble's Clear brand Shampoo with a real-life married celebrity couple, a famous female model and a male singer/actor. The fourth multiple celebrity ad was for a national bank, Deniz Bank, and featured a talk show host along with a middle-aged male actor. The last was a Nescafe ad and featured a group of young but highly famous stage actors. Among some of the single celebrity endorsed ads, we can list a national bank's credit card ad with a female actress, an Adidas ad featuring NBA player Dwight Howard, a national soft-drink brand with a female pop singer, another soft-drink brand featuring a male talk show host. The reliability of the measuring instrument was evaluated by Cronbach Alpha analysis ($\alpha = 0,85$).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Several statistical techniques were used at the analytical stage, including frequency analysis and independent sample t-tests.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents According to Demographic Characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	197	57,6
Male	145	42,4
Age		
18-23	121	35,4
24-29	106	31,0
30-35	115	33,6

Table 1 above shows the distribution of the sample according to gender and age groups. Out of the 342 respondents in the study, 197 were female and 145 were male consumers. Roughly 65% of the sample was made up of consumers between the ages of 24-35.

Table 2. Consumers Preference For Single vs. Multiple Celebrity Endorsements in Advertisements

	Frequency	Percentage
Single Celebrity Ads	94	27,5
Multiple Celebrity Ads	248	72,5
TOTAL	342	100,0

When respondents were questioned about their preferences regarding the use of single and multiple celebrity endorsements in advertisements, 72% stated they preferred ads where there are multiple celebrities endorsing a product. Consumers reported ads with multiple celebrities create more positive attitude toward that product and brand. Consumers elaborated by adding that multiple celebrity endorsements implies a consensus toward that product or service, thus increasing the level of credibility and persuasion.

The first two hypotheses of the study (H1 and H2) argued whether there is a significant difference between a consumer's gender and his purchase intention with respect to single vs. multiple celebrity ads. H1 has been rejected since the analysis revealed a significance level of $(p) 0,47 > 0,05$. Thus, it is concluded that there is no significant difference for male and female consumers and their purchase intentions with respect to single celebrity endorsement ads. A similar finding has been reported for H2 hypothesis. The analysis revealed a significance level of $(p) 0,59 > 0,05$, meaning there is no significant difference for male and female consumers and their purchase intentions with respect to multiple celebrity endorsement ads.

Table 3. Independent Sample T –test for Single Celebrity Endorsements

	Gender	Mean	St. Deviation	t value	p value
Purchase Intention	Female	3,41	0,619	0,713	0,47
	Male	3,36	0,676		
Attitude Toward Ad	Female	3,27	0,691	2,001	0,04
	Male	3,11	0,796		
Attitude Toward Brand	Female	2,57	1,278	0,568	0,57
	Male	2,48	1,44		

The second set of hypotheses (H3 & H4) related to the impact of the gender of the consumer and their attitude toward the ad with respect to ads featuring single vs. multiple celebrity endorsements. H3 was accepted since a significance level of (p) $0,04 > 0,05$ was reported. Similarly, H4 was also supported with a significance level of (p) $0,03 > 0,05$. Therefore, it was concluded that there is actually a difference between male and female consumers and their attitude toward ads with respect to single vs. multiple celebrity endorsements. The group statistics for male and female consumers are depicted on Table 3 above.

Table 4. Independent Sample T –test for Multiple Celebrity Endorsements

	Gender	Mean	St. Deviation	t value	p value
Purchase Intention	Female	3,54	0,655	0,535	0,59
	Male	3,5	0,785		
Attitude Toward Ad	Female	3,51	0,714	2,077	0,03
	Male	3,34	0,798		
Attitude Toward Brand	Female	3,3	0,759	1,99	0,04
	Male	3,13	0,809		

The last set of hypotheses (H5 & H6) in the study focused on the gender of the consumer would have an impact on attitude toward brand with respect to ads featuring single vs. multiple celebrity endorsements. H5 was rejected with a p-value of 0,57 but H6 was supported with a p-value of 0,04. As a result, it was concluded that there is indeed a difference between male and female consumers in their attitude toward an ad for ads with both single and multiple celebrity endorsements. However, no differences were observed among the sexes, when purchase intentions and attitude toward brand were considered. The situation was different for ads featuring multiple celebrities. Even though no difference was reported among male and female consumers for purchase intentions, men and women developed varying attitudes toward ads and brands.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The empirical work in this study was based on an urban sample from the capital city of Ankara. The sample size was relatively small (342 respondents) due to limited resources. Further research is needed to explore this issue in greater depth across Turkey. It would be interesting to assess whether the results found here would hold in the case where the same study is conducted in other major cities like (Istanbul, Izmir, etc.) of the country. Additionally, the study can be repeated in the Anatolian (rural) region of Turkey with a rural population and the results from both studies can be compared.

Further research can incorporate other demographic variables such as age and education level. It would be interesting to determine whether consumers from varying age groups and education levels portray differences in attitudes and behavior towards brands when exposed to ads featuring single vs. multiple celebrity endorsements.

7. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study are expected to provide guidance to advertising agencies and specialists in the Turkish market to improve the effectiveness of their celebrity-based advertising strategies. This research revealed that Turkish consumers were generally positive about the use of celebrities in advertising. However, there is a need for further investigation to understand the extent to which Turkish consumers believe the claims made by celebrities about products and services they endorse. The positioning of celebrities in the minds of consumers, their credibility level are important aspects to investigate. Managers should focus research efforts in these particular areas to improve advertising effectiveness and ultimately increase potential revenues.

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