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# Two-Sided Versus One-Sided Celebrity Endorsements: The Impact on Advertising Effectiveness and Credibility

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*This study examines celebrity endorsements in advertising using a two-sided framework, in terms of the internalization and identification processes of social influence as discussed by Kelman (1961). The two-sided execution was designed to increase a viewer's perception of advertiser credibility by including a discussion of a limitation of the advertised service. Results show that when compared to a traditional one-sided celebrity endorsement, the two-sided communication elicited significantly higher advertising credibility and effectiveness ratings, higher evaluation of the sponsor in terms of perceived overall quality of service, as well as a significantly greater intention to use the advertised service. These findings suggest that the use of a celebrity appeal in a two-sided form is an effective advertising strategy.*

Advertisers regularly pursue strategies designed to attract attention to their communication and to distinguish their product from competing products with the hope of influencing purchase. In an ever-competitive world, a premium is placed on an approach which can achieve these objectives. One attempt at such a strategy involves the use of a celebrity spokesperson. According to Atkin and Block (1983), there are several reasons why a well-known endorser may be influential. First, such a spokesperson attracts attention to the advertisement in the cluttered stream of messages. In addition, celebrities are traditionally viewed as being highly dynamic individuals with attractive and likeable qualities. Their credibility and believability, however, remain in question.

The use of celebrity spokespeople has been on the rise (*Advertising Age* 1978). A 1975 Gallup and Robinson study (reported by Forkan 1975) estimated that 15 percent of prime time television commercials featured celebrities. By 1978, the number was reported to be over 20 percent. According to a recent report, individuals in the advertising field were said to agree that celebrities are being sought out to endorse products as never before (Sherman 1985). Given this increase in use, research on celebrity endorsements becomes increasingly important to advertisers. This is especially true since past empirical research has shown celebrities to be well liked and oftentimes attractive, though not always credible and effective spokespeople (Atkin and Block 1983; Freiden 1984; Friedman, Termini and Washington 1977).

## Purpose

This research examines celebrity endorsements that utilize a two-sided format in which the celebrity spokesperson makes both positive and negative statements regarding the advertised product. This format is designed to enhance both celebrity effectiveness and overall advertising effectiveness by increasing perceived credibility. This two-sided format is compared to the more traditional one-sided format where only positive claims are made about the product by a celebrity.

## Background

A celebrity is defined as "an individual who is known to the public (i.e., actor, sports figure, entertainer, etc.) for his or her achievements in areas other than that of the product class endorsed" (cf., Friedman and Friedman 1979). Although previous studies have found these individuals to be likeable and/or attractive, these favorable perceptions have not consistently carried over to enhance measures of believability and purchase intention.

Friedman and Friedman (1979) found empirical evidence that, in the promotion of products high in psychological and/or social risk, use of a celebrity endorser would lead to greater believability, a more favorable evaluation of the product and advertisement, and a significantly more positive purchase intention than advertisements using an "expert" or "typical consumer" endorser. Such effects were absent when celebrity advertising was used in conjunction with a product high in financial, performance and/or physical risk (i.e., a vacuum cleaner). In general however, celebrity endorsers were found to be attractive and likeable.

Similarly, Freiden (1984) found that a celebrity advertisement for a television set (a product high in financial and performance risk) generated higher mean values for the *likeability* of the spokesperson as compared to ads featuring an expert, typical consumer or CEO. Measures related to the knowledge and believability of the spokesperson, product quality, trustworthiness of the advertiser and purchase intent, did not reveal especially favorable ratings.

Two additional studies, focusing on products high in social risk, support findings which suggest the effectiveness of using a celebrity endorser. Friedman, Termini and Washington (1977) found that a celebrity endorsement for a fictitious brand of sangria scored significantly higher on a product-based characteristic (probable taste); and marginally higher on purchase intent than did advertisements with no spokesperson. Believability, although

higher for the celebrity spokesperson condition, approached but did not reach significance. Atkin and Block (1983) found that advertisements for a brand of alcohol which utilized celebrity endorsements produced consistently more favorable affective ratings for the advertisement and the product than did advertisements using non-celebrity endorsers. No difference in advertisement believability between experimental conditions was evident. Similarly, behavioral purchase intention, although higher for the celebrity version of the message, was not observed to be significant.

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## The use of celebrity spokespeople has been on the rise.

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In sum, these studies seem to suggest that product type has a mediating effect on the overall effectiveness of using a celebrity as a product spokesperson. That is, products high in psychological and/or social risk seem to be best suited for such a strategy (cf., Friedman and Friedman 1979). Even for these products, however, purchase intention is not consistently enhanced by such a strategy. Also, all studies report a direct correlation between believability and overall advertisement effectiveness as measured by purchase intention. That is, in all studies discussed, an effect for believability was mirrored in the purchase intention measure. Together these findings suggest that *believability has not always* been observed to be enhanced through the use of a celebrity appeal.

This study examines a strategy designed to enhance the credibility of a celebrity spokesperson through the use of a two-sided appeal. Before discussing that strategy, however, it is important to understand the theoretical framework advanced to explain the effectiveness of advertising using celebrity

endorsers. This framework is introduced in the following section.

**How Celebrity Ads Influence the Consumer.** The effectiveness of celebrity advertising has been linked by some authors, to the process of social influence (cf., Friedman and Friedman 1979). In a seminal work, Deutsch and Gerard (1955) distinguished two forms of social influence. The first, termed "informational social influence," refers to "influence to accept information obtained from another as evidence about reality." The second, "normative social influence," refers to the influence to conform to another person or group.

Kelman (1961) was the first to identify the processes of social influence. He suggested that there are three such processes which, when pursued, facilitate the potential that an individual will accept influence from another person or group: *compliance*, *identification* and *internalization*. Identification and internalization are particularly applicable to the study of celebrity endorsements.

*Identification* is said to occur when an individual adopts the behavior of another person (or group). Because the individual aspires to be like that person or group, adoption of the behavior enhances the individual's self-image. This process relates to Deutsch and Gerard's normative influence type and has been hypothesized to be strongly related to affective characteristics of the celebrity endorser such as likeability and attractiveness (Friedman and Friedman 1979). It is through the identification process that celebrity endorsements achieve their effectiveness, particularly in the case of products high in psychological or social risk.

*Internalization* as a process of social influence relates to Deutsch and Gerard's informational influence type. It is said to occur when individuals conform to the attitudes or behavior of others because these actions or beliefs are perceived to be credible and are congruent with one's own value system. It is the content of the induced behavior which is said to be rewarding to the individual. According to Kelman

(1961), the characteristics of the influencing agent play an important role in internalization, but the critical dimension is credibility.

The effectiveness of celebrity endorsements traditionally has not been strongly linked to this process, as a celebrity's reason for promoting a product can just as easily be attributed by the consumer to an external motive (i.e., a monetary payment), as to an internal motive (i.e., the celebrity's true belief in the worth of the product). Hence, for this reason, the consumer's perception of credibility of the advertiser suffers. This is especially true when the image or knowledge base of the celebrity is inconsistent with that which the product requires. This may also explain why experts have been shown to perform better than celebrities for ad- and product-based measures in the case of products with high financial, performance or physical risks (Friedman and Friedman 1979).

An important issue relates to the development of a strategy for use in advertising using celebrity spokespeople which benefits from the dual support of the identification and internalization processes of social influence. Indeed, prior empirical research has shown that identification and internalization can occur concurrently as mediators of attitude change (Mills and Harvey 1972; Romer 1979) and numerous studies in both psychology and marketing have focused on these processes (Burnkrant and Cousineau 1975; Cohen and Golden 1972; Norman 1976). It has been established that the effectiveness of advertisements using celebrity endorsers is strongly linked to the identification process of social influence through the dimension of likeability of the personality. It remains to develop a strong link to internalization by concurrently enhancing the credibility of the appeal. A two-sided approach to celebrity endorsements may supply the answer. Two-sided messages present the advantages as well as slight disadvantages in the product's characteristics. This technique should increase believability and therefore purchase intention, as opposed to the traditional one-

sided appeal in which only positive characteristics are presented. This may even be the case for those products not only typically best suited for promotion through a celebrity appeal.

**Two-Sided Messages.** As applied to advertising, a two-sided message involves those instances when a communicator claims that the advertised product performs well on attributes which are important determinants of product usage. Product performance on less-important characteristics might be disclaimed and/or limited in scope. Alternatively as noted, a one-sided message only presents positive aspects of the product. In the use of two-sided appeals, if an attempt is made to dilute the significance of negative claims made within the text of the communication on an attribute-specific basis, then the ad is termed two-sided refutational. If no such attempt is made, then the ad is said to be two-sided non-refutational in nature.

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### **. . . studies suggest that product type has a mediating effect on overall effectiveness of a celebrity spokesperson.**

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Relevant research has shown the two-sided non-refutational message to be higher in credibility than the two-sided refutational communication (Kamins 1984; Kamins and Assael 1987). In relation to our intent to increase the credibility of celebrity advertising, these results suggested that the two-sided non-refutational message would be the more appropriate technique to apply.

Research on two-sided non-refutational appeals has typically compared this execution with that of the one-sided approach. This research has shown that two-sided non-refutational

appeals were more effective than one-sided communications in increasing copy believability (Etgar and Goodwin 1982; Golden and Alpert 1978, 1987; Kamins 1985; Settle and Golden 1974; Smith and Hunt 1978; Swinyard 1981). Attempts to influence product ratings, intentions or attitudes through the use of such appeals have met with only limited success, despite the appeal's apparent positive effect upon credibility. In celebrity endorsements, however, a two-sided approach may effectively influence purchase intention since the use of celebrities has already been shown to positively impact upon a subject's affective reactions to the advertisement. Added credibility gained by two-sidedness may be enough to dramatically increase purchase intention as well as the subject's impression of the effectiveness of the ad and the image of the sponsor.

### **Hypotheses**

- H<sub>1</sub>: The ratings of ad credibility and effectiveness will be significantly higher for celebrity endorsements using a two-sided as opposed to a one-sided format.
- H<sub>2</sub>: A celebrity endorsement presented in a two-sided form will lead to a significantly higher sponsor evaluation ratings on overall quality of service than a one-sided endorsement.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Purchase intention for a two-sided celebrity endorsement will be significantly higher than that observed for a one-sided endorsement.

### **Methodology**

**Product.** A service (a management consulting firm) was used in this study. A consulting service can be classified as high in both financial and performance risk, and therefore may not be the optimal choice for use of a celebrity appeal (cf., Friedman and Friedman 1979). Therefore, by design, the choice of this service should make the observation of a significant "sideness" effect

difficult, and if evident, such an effect should be more robust than had a product high in social and/or psychological risk been studied. A consulting service was selected because a majority of small- to medium-sized businesses face situations which compel them to consider outside sources of support to arrive at feasible and effective solutions to business problems. The advantage of advertising a management consulting service was the ability to appeal to a number of different business types, thereby diminishing the possibility that findings are anchored to a specific industry. The company used (Highland Decision Systems) was new and, therefore, had a small share in the market area investigated. At the time of the study, they had not yet advertised their services.

**Sample.** The subjects were owners or CEOs of small- to medium-sized businesses with under \$10 million in annual gross sales and less than 200 employees. A proportional quota sample of 52 businesses in the greater Los Angeles region was completed based on the actual distribution of the industries within that region. The sample was selected using Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes and listings of local merchants who met both the industry and size requirements. The industries selected included manufacturing, high-tech products, consumer products, health care, retail, transportation, marketing and business service companies. This cross section was designed to be general enough to cover the range of small- to medium-sized business arenas, while allowing the experimenters an opportunity to screen industries and those specific companies that were not likely to consider management consulting services.

In addition to meeting the requirement of being the owner or CEO of the company, executives included in the sample had to have the decision-making power to evaluate and adopt the advertised service. Identification of the key individual for each company was acquired through pre-telephone contact with his/her office and/or public

information. Time constraints on many of the executives contacted precluded their completion of the interview. The findings discussed here are based upon 52 completed interviews.

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### **. . . research has shown the two-sided non-refutational message to be higher in credibility than the two-sided refutational communication . . .**

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**Advertisements.** Two full-page, black-and-white advertisements were created to reflect the two experimental conditions; that is, an advertisement using a celebrity spokesperson making product-related statements in either a one-sided or two-sided non-refutational form. The celebrity endorser chosen was Leonard Nimoy. Nimoy was selected on the basis of pretests in which 12 male celebrities were rated on five personal characteristics of a spokesperson. These characteristics, drawn from prior research, were: (1) credibility; (2) trustworthiness; (3) believability; (4) identifiability and (5) consistency or congruence of the spokesperson's image with the product. The test was administered at a major West Coast university using 20 undergraduate business students as subjects. The 12 male celebrities had previously been identified as satisfying a high likeability requirement (i.e., Leonard Nimoy, Tom Selleck, William Shatner, and Mel Gibson, among others). Celebrities were rated using seven-point scales (e.g., 1 = not at all credible; 7 = completely credible). Four celebrities were observed to be above the scale midpoint on measures of credibility, trustworthiness and believability. In addition, their images were found to be congruent with the image of a spokesper-

son for a management consulting service (see Kahle and Homer (1985) for a discussion of congruence as it relates to celebrity appeals). Additionally, all 20 subjects were able to correctly identify a television show or movie in which these four celebrities appeared, lending face validity to the claim of identifiability for each.

A second test, involving a sample of 10 business owners or CEOs of small- to medium-sized companies in the target area of the study was undertaken. These individuals were asked to rate the four remaining celebrities on the same scales used in the earlier test. Leonard Nimoy was the only celebrity who scored above the scale midpoint on each measure *and* was correctly identified by each subject.

Advertisements were identical in layout and spacing. Clad in a business suit, Nimoy appeared on the left side of the ad. Copy appeared on the right side as a personal statement from the celebrity. The ad copy for the one-sided communication appeared as follows:

"You've launched your business and you're headed at full speed towards the 21st century. You know your product is good, and you have the expertise to provide your company with the product innovations to keep you an industry leader. But you've begun to notice that your business is pushing hard to keep up the pace.

This is where the Management Experts at Highland Decision Systems can help. I know. . . I use them in my business.

Highland Decision System. . . The Small Business Experts. The logical choice to take your business where no business has gone before."

The two-sided advertisement was identical to that of the one-sided with the addition of the following disclaimer at the end of the second paragraph:

"They aren't the best known business consultants, . . . Just the best."

The attribute used in the disclaimer was selected on the basis of two criteria in pretest: (1) a moderate degree of importance, and (2) consistency in evaluation. Prior research in the message sidedness area has shown that disclaiming too important an attribute may negatively impact purchase intention (Settle and Golden 1974; Smith and Hunt 1978); whereas disclaiming too unimportant an attribute may have little, if any, effect upon credibility of the advertiser. Pretests revealed that the attribute relating to prior knowledge of the company best fit the above criteria for disclamation.

**Experimental Procedure.** An appointment was made well in advance, and the instrument was administered to each executive at his/her place of business. The experimental guise involved asking subjects to serve as "expert judges" in the evaluation of a proposed advertisement for a university-sponsored advertising competition. Such a guise was designed to avoid a demand effect where the executive would feel committed to a favorable evaluation of the advertisement. Fifty-two subjects participated in the study.

Subjects were initially exposed to one of the advertisements for a period of two minutes. They were asked to take this time to read the ad carefully, with the understanding that a short questionnaire, focusing mainly on the ad, was to follow. Subjects then completed the questionnaire by responding to questions related to the effectiveness and credibility of the ad; the evaluation of the company on a measure of overall quality of service; and purchase intention (i.e., future use of the service). The questionnaire ended with classification questions related to the subject's business characteristics such as business type, number of employees, approximate yearly sales and current and past use or non-use of consulting services. By design, the number of questions was kept to a minimum given the nature of the sample (executives) and their concern for effective time management. After completion of the questionnaire, subjects were thanked for their partic-

ipation and debriefed.

The dependent variables measured were:

**Advertisement Evaluation.** The subject's overall evaluation of the advertisement on credibility and effectiveness was measured respectively on 7-point scales ranging from not credible (1) to credible (7); and ineffective (1) to effective (7).

**Sponsor Evaluation.** Subjects were asked to evaluate the sponsor (Highland Decision Systems) on overall quality of service. This measure was coded on a 7-point scale ranging from poor (1) to excellent (7).

**Purchase Intention.** This measure required respondents to indicate their inclination to use Highland Decision System's services based upon a reading of the given advertisement. The scale was anchored by not inclined (1) and strongly inclined (7).

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### **. . . disclaiming too important an attribute may negatively impact purchase intention . . .**

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**Independent Variable:** As noted earlier, the study manipulated the sidedness of the celebrity spokesperson's comments regarding the sponsoring company, creating two experimental groups. Twenty-six subjects responded to the one-sided celebrity appeal, while an equal number responded to the two-sided celebrity appeal. The data were initially analyzed in a multivariate fashion through the use of Hotelling's  $T^2$  procedure for all dependent measures concurrently. Conditional upon observed significance, ensuing data analysis proceeded through the use of pairwise t-tests for each of the dependent measures separately.

To ensure that the two experimental groups did not significantly vary on company-specific characteristics, measures relating to annual sales, number

of employees, type of business classification and the proportion of companies who currently use consulting services were examined. Results showed no significant effects for each measure considered in terms of annual sales ( $t = 1.46$ ), number of employees ( $t = 1.40$ ); type of business classification (chi-square = 4.02), and proportion who currently used consulting services ( $t = .87$ ). These findings supply evidence that the two experimental groups did not initially differ on important measures relating to company-specific characteristics, and discounts the use of such measures as confounding variables in explaining experimental effects.

## **Results**

An overall multivariate Hotelling  $T^2$  procedure was utilized to determine if a significant difference was evident between the experimental conditions when all four dependent measures were considered simultaneously. Results showed that this was the case ( $T^2 = 7.29$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ) and conditional upon this observed significance, a test of each hypothesis was undertaken with the use of univariate t-tests.

**Hypothesis 1:** The findings presented in Table 1 for advertisement evaluations lends strong statistical support to the first hypothesis. That is, subjects' evaluation of advertisement credibility was higher for those exposed to the two-sided celebrity appeal ( $\bar{x} = 4.85$ ) relative to those exposed to the respective one-sided communication ( $\bar{x} = 4.31$ ). A pairwise one-tailed Student's t-test revealed this difference to be statistically significant ( $t = 3.27$ ,  $p \leq .005$ ). Moreover, those exposed to the two-sided communication rated it significantly more effective ( $\bar{x} = 4.85$ ) than the one-sided advertisement ( $\bar{x} = 4.38$ ,  $t = 2.79$ ,  $p \leq .005$ ).

**Hypothesis 2:** The next step was to determine if the positive impact of sidedness upon advertisement credibility and effectiveness also was reflected in an enhancement of the image of the sponsor in terms of overall quality of

service. The findings presented in Table 1 indicate that this was indeed the case, lending statistical support to Hypothesis 2. Subjects exposed to the two-sided communication evaluated the sponsor as significantly higher in overall quality of service ( $\bar{x} = 5.00$ ) than those exposed to the alternative one-sided appeal ( $\bar{x} = 4.61$ ,  $t = 2.28$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ).

**Hypothesis 3:** This hypothesis focused on the subject's intention to use the sponsor's services based upon exposure to the advertisement. The findings as presented in Table 1 support this hypothesis, with subjects exposed to the two-sided communication indicating greater intention ( $\bar{x} = 4.31$ ) than those exposed to the one-sided ad ( $\bar{x} = 3.69$ ,  $t = 2.01$ ,  $p \leq .025$ ).

## Discussion

The results of this study are encouraging in that they indicate the effectiveness in use of a two-sided as opposed to one-sided celebrity spokesperson appeal across three distinct levels. First, ad-related variables such as credibility and effectiveness were significantly enhanced. Significant results for credibility is rare in research of this type, and the findings evident here are consistent with the interpretation that sidedness enhances credibility through the identification process of social influence. Moreover, the sponsor received significantly higher ratings on overall quality of service and subjects' revealed a significantly greater intention to use the company to tackle consulting problems.

Although the results of the current research are impressive, conclusions as to their relative meaning await a comparison with mean values derived from non-celebrity advertisements varying in sidedness and product type. This was not the goal of the current study. The research focus here was simply to compare a strategy of two-sidedness in celebrity endorsements with the more traditional one-sided approach.

The current study does suggest that sidedness in celebrity endorsements holds great potential for advertisers. Future research should investigate this

issue in greater depth through consideration of other variables such as *product type* (i.e., a service vs. a product and/or high vs. low involvement product classes); status of endorser (i.e., expert, company president, typical consumer and celebrity); and the variation in importance and number of attributes disclaimed.

Finally, advertisers today seem to be keenly attuned to the attributional processes through which subjects infer a spokesperson's reason and rationale for advertising a product (Folkes 1988; Kamins and Assael 1987). The recent use of celebrities in advertising who make the claim that they have never served as a spokesperson before (i.e., George C. Scott for Renault) is a direct attempt by advertisers to influence consumers' attributional processes. That is, it is hoped that consumers will attribute the celebrity's involvement in the product to his/her firm belief in product quality and service (or other similar attributes) rather than just the monetary reward. Hence, this strategy as outlined above and the use of a two-sided communication both have a goal of increasing advertiser credibility. In future research, it would be useful to study the interaction between these two strategies as well as the attributional processes which underlie their effectiveness.

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TABLE 1  
Mean, Standard Deviation and t-Test Results for One-Sided and Two-Sided Advertisements Utilizing a Celebrity Spokesperson

Experimental Condition	One-Sided Ad (n = 26)	Two-Sided Ad (n = 26)	t-Test Result	Sig.
Dependent Measure				
Advertisement Evaluation				
Credibility	$\bar{x} = 4.31$ $s = .63$	$\bar{x} = 4.85$ $s = .56$	3.27	.005
Effectiveness	$\bar{x} = 4.38$ $s = .65$	$\bar{x} = 4.85$ $s = .56$	2.79	.005
Sponsor Evaluation				
Quality of Service	$\bar{x} = 4.61$ $s = .51$	$\bar{x} = 5.00$ $s = .71$	2.28	.01
Purchase Intention	$\bar{x} = 3.69$ $s = 1.11$	$\bar{x} = 4.31$ $s = 1.11$	2.01	.025

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Received August 31, 1987. Revision accepted for publication December 13, 1988.

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