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Beyond Endorsements: How Celebrity Creative Directors Influence Consumers' Attitudes toward the Advertisement

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ABSTRACT

Many marketers are beginning to expand the roles that celebrities play in support of brands. Connections now go beyond the typical endorsement relationship to include employing celebrities as Creative Directors. It is imperative to understand the implications of these new relationships, as they may have different outcomes for the brand. Relying on research from the brand alliance literature, theories on the associative network model of memory, and cultural transfer of meaning, we suggest that hiring celebrities to act in the capacity of Creative Directors may have additional positive ramifications for the brand that go beyond simply utilizing celebrities as brand endorsers. Theoretically, this research extends our understanding of how consumers react to the varied roles celebrities might assume in support of a brand.

Two studies are presented. The first shows that expanding the celebrity role to Creative Director, as opposed to merely an endorser, can have positive implications for the brand. This study also investigates the mediating potential of consumer perceptions of the celebrity's expertise. The second study expands upon the first by identifying the moderating impact of consumer skepticism toward advertising. Specifically, our results suggest that when celebrities are given the title of Creative Director (as opposed to endorser), perceptions of celebrity expertise increase, leading to correspondingly more positive attitudes toward an advertisement containing the celebrity and the brand. Further, the present research expands the literature to show that skepticism toward advertising moderates the relationship between the role that a celebrity plays in regard to a brand and consumer perceptions of celebrity expertise. Theoretical and managerial implications of these results are considered and ideas for future research are presented.

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