SYNOPSIS

*Impact of Congruence of Celebrity Endorser Personality and Brand Personality on Consumers’ Attitudes and Intentions*

The use of celebrities in brand endorsements has been a widespread strategy in advertising. Across the globe, companies are spending a large amount of their marketing communication budget on celebrity endorsements. However, celebrity endorsements could lead to adverse consequences if either the appropriate celebrity has not been selected or the celebrity has not been utilized properly. Over the years, academicians and practitioners have been trying to determine effective ways to select appropriate celebrities and effective strategies to utilize celebrities properly in various channels of marketing communications. A good number of models and tools have been proposed to help the selection and use of the celebrities. Prominent among them are Hovland and Weiss’s (1951) source credibility theory; McCracken’s (1986) meaning transfer theory; and match-up theory (Kamins, 1990; Misra and Beatty, 1990; Kamins and Gupta, 1994; Till and Busler, 1998, 2000).

In the area of match-up or congruence, researchers have focused on the congruence/match of a celebrity endorser with the product and its effectiveness. However, no prior study has investigated the congruence from the personality-based match between celebrity and the brand. In order to establish a differentiated positioning for a brand, in today’s communication clutter, it may be necessary to select a celebrity whose personality traits match with the specific brand’s personality. The present research is focused on the impact of the congruence of the personality of a specific brand (than a product category) and the personality of a celebrity on consumer’s evaluation of the endorsement. More specifically it investigated the effect of personality-based celebrity-brand congruence on consumers’ perceptions of the celebrity’s suitability as the endorser and his/her credibility, as well as on consumer belief and
attitudes. Endorser’s suitability and credibility are very important criteria of endorser selection. Therefore, the investigation of the impact of personality-based congruence on these source-specific characteristics would be relevant to practitioners. The current study also investigated the impact of congruence level on the advertising effectiveness measures like advertisement believability, attitude toward ad, attitude toward brand and purchase intention. This study borrows from two consumer behavior theories of motivation to explain the impact of a personality-based congruence/incongruence (with a brand). These are the social adaptation theory and attribution theory/correspondence theory.

A total of fifteen (15) hypotheses were proposed on the basis of a literature review. Survey method was used as the methodology for the main study. Prior to the main study, two focus group discussions and two pre-tests were conducted to select two real brands and four real celebrities. While selecting brands and celebrities, issue of product categories; gender and profession of celebrities were taken care of. Four fictional ads (two for each brand) were created and used for the main study. Data was collected from urban youth in the age bracket of 18-35 years across India. Structural equation modeling and t-tests have been used to test the relationships hypothesized in this study. Major results supported most of the hypotheses. The results further indicated the impact of personality-based celebrity-brand congruence on endorser-specific characteristics such as suitability and credibility. The results also found the subsequent impact of congruence on consumer attitudes and purchase intention. This study substantiates the ‘match-up theory’ and integrates all the theories of celebrity endorsement through its empirically validated model. The study has major implications for academics as well as practitioners. The study answered some of the research gaps found in celebrity endorsement literature and provides some new areas of research.
**Keywords:** Personality-based celebrity-brand congruence; Endorser Suitability; Endorser Credibility.