

Determination of the Impact of Spokesperson on Advertising Effectiveness

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Abstract

This article contributes to the revelation of a relevant and complex problem of the selection of advertising spokesperson while answering the research question, which lays a foundation of the scientific problem: how to choose a spokesperson for advertising to be effective? Accordingly, the aim of the article is to determine the impact of spokesperson on advertising effectiveness. Grounded on the theoretical framework, three different theoretical models representing the research hypotheses are analyzed in the article by applying PLS-SEM and PLS path modelling multi-group analysis. The analysis of the research results led to the elaboration of general model of the impact of spokesperson on advertising effectiveness, revealing that consumers' attitude towards spokesperson that they are exposed to have an influence over their attitude towards advertisement, brand and purchase intention. Nevertheless, it is proved that different advertising spokespersons have different influence on advertising effectiveness. The conclusions are made that if seeking advertising effectiveness expressed as enhanced level of consumers' purchase intentions, then the choice of celebrity spokesperson highly improves the possibility of creating effective advertising.

Keywords: Advertising, celebrity, effectiveness, spokesperson.

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Introduction

Advertisement has a direct relationship with the sales performance (Zia & Shahzad, 2015). As competition in many consumer goods sectors increases, the need for finding

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superior and effective marketing and advertising decisions for many business organizations becomes essential. In the world of marketing, advertisers frequently employ spokespersons to attract consumers' attention. The effects of spokesperson endorsements on consumer perceptions of products have been the subject of considerable empirical study (Burroughs & Feinberg, 1987). For example, analyzing advertising in service sector, Stafford, Stafford and Day (2002) emphasize that conspicuous use of a spokesperson helps in enhancing service tangibility and providing a point of differentiation.

Hsu (2009) emphasizes that making the selection of an appropriate spokesperson is a crucial task: a good spokesperson can improve consumer perception and confidence in a product, generally boosting sales and increasing brand value, while a poor spokesperson can have minimal or even negative effects. Selecting the right spokesperson is a difficult and often complex decision based on critical considerations, such as source credibility and attractiveness, as well as matching the brand or organization's image with spokesperson characteristics (Stafford, Stafford, & Day, 2002). Many types of spokespersons are distinguished in scientific literature: celebrities (Hsu, 2009), (Rossiter & Smidts, 2012); experts (Freiden, 1982), (Thompson, 1992); typical consumers (Freiden, 1982); employees (Stephens & Faranda, 1993), (Pai, 2013); and animated characters (Stafford, Stafford, & Day, 2002). Therefore, answering the question of the type of spokesperson in advertising is a crucial strategic decision (Rossiter & Smidts, 2012); the assumption that advertising spokesperson may have an impact on advertising effectiveness is theoretically substantiated.

Proceeding with the scientific discussion, this article contributes to the revelation of a relevant and complex problem of the selection of advertising spokesperson while answering the research question, which lays a foundation of the scientific problem: how to choose a spokesperson for advertising to be effective? Accordingly, the aim of the article is to determine the impact of spokesperson on advertising effectiveness.

The paper contains five main parts: theoretical framework, methodology, findings, discussion, conclusions and recommendations.

Theoretical framework

A wide body of scientific literature on advertising effectiveness can be found worldwide. Analyzing advertising effectiveness, Priester and Petty (2003) provide the following sequence of advertising process: first, advertising presents information to potential consumers; second, it results in customers adopting more favorable attitudes toward the advertised product or service; third, favorable attitudes result in a greater probability of the customer purchasing the advertised product. In other words, advertisers regularly practice the strategies intended to attract customer's interest to their message and to differentiate their offerings from rival products with the anticipation of influencing buying behavior of the customer (Aziz, Ghani, & Niazi, 2013). According to Kuvita and Karlíček (2014), the race for getting the attention of a target audience is vast due to the information overload of modern society. Therefore, the use of spokesperson has become a common strategy to enhance product visibility to consumers (Hsu, 2009). Burroughs and Feinberg (1987) suggest that spokespersons are an important part of the cognitive

representation of the products they endorse. E.g., according to the research provided in Pakistan (Aziz, Ghani, & Niazi, 2013), use of a famous person in advertising provides grounds to persuade product attitude along with buying plan of customers in an optimistic manner. Therefore, it might be assumed that positive attitude toward the spokesperson would result in more positive attitude toward the product.

The usage of spokesperson in advertising was analyzed in many marketing researches. The analysis of scientific literature (Kamins, 1989) suggests that in practice mostly used types of spokesperson are celebrities and typical consumers (non-celebrities). The contribution for substantiation of the usage of latter two types of spokesperson was laid by different researchers (Kamins & Gupta, 1994), (Pai, 2013), (Kang & Goodman, 2010).

According to Freiden (1984), celebrities are either well-known individuals who are directly associated with the product category, either famous people who are recognized for achievements in the areas unrelated to the product class. Promotion of products through celebrities is a trendy advertising practice around the world (Aziz, Ghani, & Niazi, 2013). The reason behind the popularity of celebrity advertising is the advertisers' belief that messages delivered by well-known personalities achieve a high degree of attention and recall for some consumers (Ohanian, 1991).

The use of highly attractive women in advertising is certainly popular, though support for their effectiveness is somewhat mixed (Bower, 2001). The results of the research provided by other authors (Bhatt, Jayswal, & Patel, 2013) suggest that in developing positive attitude towards the advertisements, advertisers can use attractive model or celebrity, and expose them to more visual part of advertisement; moreover, advertisers can use the celebrity source credibility to develop strong and positive brand attitude and attitude towards the advertisement. However, the fact that the audience remembers the advertisement does not automatically mean they received the core message about the product or a brand (Kuvita & Karlíček, 2014).

Despite the wide body of literature favoring the usage of celebrities in advertising, a number of researches provide the evidence of the existence of so called 'Vampire effect'. Vampire effect can be defined as a decrease in brand recall for an advertising stimulus that features a celebrity endorser versus the same stimulus with an unknown but equally attractive endorser (Erfgen, Zenker, & Sattler, 2015). In an attempt to stand out from other advertising messages, marketers take the risk of getting trapped into the vampire effect of their own advertising campaigns: tools for getting attention "suck" customer attention away from core messages of the advertisement (Kuvita & Karlíček, 2014). Moreover, according to the authors, high risk of vampire effect is associated with using celebrities in advertising. Thus, an assumption can be done that non-celebrity spokesperson (i.e., regular consumer) might be more effective than some well-known person.

Thus, advertising effectiveness might be assessed through the attitudes. Consumer's attitude towards one object is said to affect his/her attitudes towards another object with which it is associated; in other words, consumers' attitude towards advertisements that they are exposed to has an influence over their attitude towards brand and purchase intention (Nabsiah & Methaq, 2011). Accordingly, the theoretical model of the impact of spokesperson on advertising effectiveness can be constructed (see Figure 1).

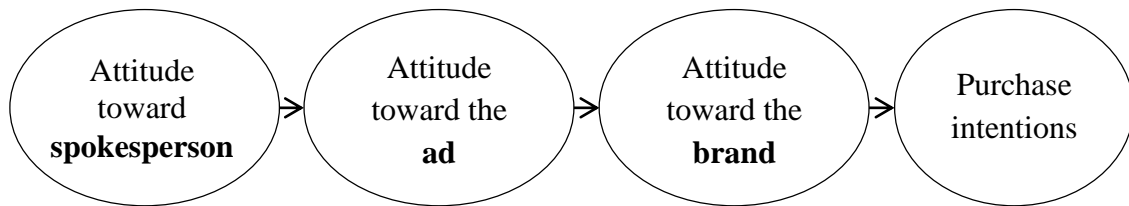


Figure 1 The theoretical model of the impact of spokesperson on advertising effectiveness

Methodology

Based on the 2 reasons (non-normal data and small sample size), the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) is preferred and applied in this research in order to test the research hypotheses. The hypotheses are grounded on the theoretical framework, thus four latent variables constitute the general research model and the causal relations between these variables represent six hypotheses regarding general model. Latter hypothesized model is expressed by three structural equations (1–3):

$$\textit{Attitude toward the ad} \text{ (case I: general; case II: celebrity spokesperson; case III: non-celebrity spokesperson)} = \beta_{20} + \beta_{21} \textit{Attitude toward spokesperson} + \zeta_2 \quad (1)$$

$$\textit{Attitude toward the brand} \text{ (case I: general; case II: celebrity spokesperson; case III: non-celebrity spokesperson)} = \beta_{30} + \beta_{31} \textit{Attitude toward spokesperson} + \beta_{32} \textit{Attitude toward the ad} + \zeta_3 \quad (2)$$

$$\textit{Purchase intentions} \text{ (case I: general; case II: celebrity spokesperson; case III: non-celebrity spokesperson)} = \beta_{40} + \beta_{41} \textit{Attitude toward spokesperson} + \beta_{42} \textit{Attitude toward the ad} + \beta_{43} \textit{Attitude toward the brand} + \zeta_4 \quad (3)$$

The same model applied for two distinct cases (advertisement with celebrity spokesperson and advertisement with non-celebrity spokesperson) comprises the rest of the research hypotheses. Consequently, statistical testing of research hypotheses is expected to allow elaborating the general model of the impact of spokesperson on advertising effectiveness; moreover, distinguishing and emphasizing the impact of different advertising spokespersons on advertising effectiveness.

All four latent variables are measured by manifest variables. The mode of the measurement model is reflective, because manifest variables are manifestations of the constructs (not the defining characteristics of the construct), changes in the construct do cause changes in the indicators, indicators share a common theme, dropping an indicator do not alter the conceptual domain of the construct and indicators covariate with each other (Petter, Straub, & Rai, 2007). Attitudes were measured on semantic differential scale (11 indicators for each attitude), thus revealing the strength and direction of a persons' attitude toward the specific object. 7-point Likert scale was used to measure purchase intentions regarding brands advertised by different spokesperson (celebrity or non-celebrity) (*questionnaire is available from the authors upon request*).

The questionnaire research was held in Lithuania, Vytautas Magnus University, February-April, 2015. Total sample size is 201 (38 percent of male, 62 percent of female; 90 percent of respondents were at the age group of 18-29 years, 10 percent of respondents were at the age group of 30-39 years). As it is suggested using a minimum sample size of ten times the maximum number of paths aiming at any construct in the outer model (i.e., the number of formative indicators per construct) and inner model (i.e., the number of path relationships directed at a particular construct) (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Mena, 2012), hence, the sample of this research is considered appropriate to reach the aim of the article.

PLS-SEM was applied for statistical analysis regarding general model; in order to assess segment-specific path coefficients, PLS path modelling multi-group analysis (PLS-MGA) was presented. IBM SPSS Statistics V.20, SmartPLS V.3 (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2014), and XLSTAT 2014 software products were used for the statistical analysis of the research results.

Findings

The analysis of the research results contains the assessment of measurement and structural models as well as statistical testing of research hypotheses. The values of composite reliability and Cronbach alpha (see Table 1) are higher than 0.7, revealing that internal consistency reliability of the reflective measurement model is satisfactory. Moreover, each indicator's standardized loadings are above 0.7, thus the measurement model is assessed as reliable. The values of average variance extracted (AVE) measure are above 0.5, substantiating that the degree of convergent validity is sufficient. For the assessment of discriminant validity in variance-based SEM, Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2014) proposed the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) criterion. The values of HTMT criterion are lower than the predefined threshold value of 0.85 (see Table 1), implying that there is no lack of discriminant validity in the reflective measurement model.

Table 1 Composite reliability, Cronbach Alpha, AVE, and HTMT values

Variables	Composite reliability	Cronbach Alpha	AVE	HTMT
Purchase intentions	0.939	0.871	0.885	-
Attitude toward the brand	0.920	0.904	0.512	->Purchase intentions: 0.442
Attitude toward the ad	0.962	0.956	0.697	->Purchase intentions: 0.495 -> Attitude toward the brand: 0.577
Attitude toward spokesperson	0.942	0.932	0.597	-> Purchase intentions: 0.218 -> Attitude toward the brand: 0.535 -> Attitude toward the ad: 0.422

The remaining two measures for assessing discriminant validity – Fornell-Larcker criterion (see Table 2) and cross-loadings – substantiate the results obtained by evaluating HTMT criterion: the degree of discriminant validity in the reflective measurement model is sufficient. Thus, the measurement model is assessed as reliable and valid.

Table 2 Fornell-Larcker criterion

Variables	Purchase intentions	Attitude toward the brand	Attitude toward the ad	Attitude toward spokesperson
Purchase intentions	0.941	-	-	-
Attitude toward the brand	0.415	0.716	-	-
Attitude toward the ad	0.455	0.567	0.835	-
Attitude toward spokesperson	0.201	0.533	0.421	0.773

Coefficient of determination (R^2) values of variables ‘purchase intentions’ and ‘attitude toward the brand’ are moderate, implying that the proportion of variance explained by the fit regarding these variables is sufficient. The R^2 value of variable ‘attitude toward the ad’ is weak (see Table 3); nevertheless, bearing in mind that latter variable is influenced by many factors that are not analyzed in the model (e.g. consumers’ personal characteristics, product consuming experience, advertising clutter), moreover, R^2 results of about 0.20 are considered high in disciplines such as consumer behavior (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011), it is assessed that latter endogenous construct’s explained variance is sufficient, thus this variable is not eliminated from the model. Exogenous variable’s effect sizes (Cohen’s f^2) on the endogenous variables range from very small to high. ‘Attitude toward spokesperson’ has barely any effect size on ‘purchase intentions’; despite this, latter variable has high effect sizes on variables ‘attitude toward the brand’ and ‘attitude toward the ad’. All the cross-validated redundancy values (Stone-Geissers’ Q^2) for endogenous latent variables are above zero. Consequently, model exhibits predictive relevance. Moreover, predictors’ variables’ variance inflation factor (VIF) is lower than 5, therefore there is no multicollinearity in the inner model.

Table 3 R Square, Cohen’s f Square, Q Square and VIF values

Variables	R^2	f^2	Q^2	VIF
Purchase intentions	0.257	-	0.196	-
Attitude toward the brand	0.428	-	0.205	->Purchase intentions: 1.745
Attitude toward the ad	0.178	-	0.103	->Purchase intentions: 1.519 -> Attitude toward the brand: 1.216
Attitude toward spokesperson	-	->Purchase intentions: 0.007 -> Attitude toward the brand: 0.183 -> Attitude toward the ad: 0.215	-	->Purchase intentions: 1.438 -> Attitude toward the brand: 1.216 -> Attitude toward the ad: 1.000

The standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) value is equal to 0.09; normed-fit index (NFI) – 0.961; hence model predictions match the data. Path Coefficients and Total effects at the general model are provided in the Table 4 below. The only one statistically non-significant direct impact is from variable ‘attitude toward spokesperson’ on variable ‘purchase intentions’. Nevertheless, total effect between latter variables is

positive and statistically significant, implying that advertising spokesperson influences the level of purchase intentions indirectly, through the formation of attitudes toward the ad and the brand: attitude toward spokesperson influences attitude toward the ad and the brand; attitude toward the ad influences purchase intentions and attitude toward the brand, which influences purchase intentions as well.

Table 4 Path Coefficients and Total Effects at the general model

Variables	Path Coefficient	S.E.	T Statistics	p-value	Total Effect	S.E.	T Statistics	p-value
Attitude toward the brand -> Purchase intentions	0.268*	0.111	2.402	0.017	0.268*	0.111	2.402	0.017
Attitude toward the ad -> Purchase intentions	0.338*	0.091	3.708	0.000	0.450*	0.074	6.046	0.000
Attitude toward the ad -> Attitude toward the brand	0.417*	0.061	6.836	0.000	0.417*	0.061	6.836	0.000
Attitude toward spokesperson -> Purchase intentions	-0.084	0.084	1.004	0.316	0.201*	0.075	2.683	0.008
Attitude toward spokesperson -> Attitude toward the brand	0.357*	0.087	4.117	0.000	0.533*	0.072	7.357	0.000
Attitude toward spokesperson -> Attitude toward the ad	0.421*	0.083	5.088	0.000	0.421*	0.083	5.088	0.000

*p < 0.05.

As the total sample contained two equal groups (i.e., segments) – evaluating advertisements with different spokespersons, PLS path modelling multi-group analysis (PLS-MGA) is applied to test research hypotheses of the general model regarding different advertising spokespersons. Before evaluating the inner model relationships, the reliability and discriminant validity of both segment-specific models was tested. The proportion of variance explained by the fit regarding model variables is higher in the model pertaining to advertisement with celebrity spokesperson compared to the same model pertaining to advertisement with non-celebrity spokesperson (see Table 5).

Table 5 R Square values for different models

Variables	R ²	
	Ad with celebrity spokesperson	Ad with non-celebrity spokesperson
Purchase intentions	0.446	0.270
Attitude toward the brand	0.608	0.464
Attitude toward the ad	0.302	0.165

Path Coefficients at models with different advertising spokespersons are presented in the Table 6. ‘Attitude toward the brand’ has statistically significant direct influence on ‘purchase intentions’ only in the case of advertising with celebrity spokesperson. The same situation is with the influence of ‘attitude toward the ad’ on ‘purchase intentions’: only in the case of advertising with celebrity spokesperson latter direct relation is statistically significant.

The direct influences of ‘attitude toward the ad’ on ‘attitude toward the brand’, of ‘attitude toward spokesperson’ on ‘attitude toward the brand’, and of ‘attitude toward spokesperson’ on ‘attitude toward the ad’ are statistically significant in both cases: advertising with celebrity spokesperson and advertising with non-celebrity spokesperson. The direct impacts of ‘attitude toward the spokesperson’ on ‘purchase intentions’ are statistically non-significant in both cases as well. Consequently, the model pertaining to advertisement with celebrity spokesperson corresponds to the general model: the only one statistically non-significant direct impact is from variable ‘attitude toward spokesperson’ on ‘purchase intentions’. On the other hand, concerning the model pertaining to advertisement with non-celebrity spokesperson, there is no variables in the analyzed model that directly affect the level of consumers’ purchase intentions.

Table 6 Path Coefficients at models with different advertising spokespersons

Variables	Ad with celebrity spokesperson				Ad with non-celebrity spokesperson			
	Path Coefficient	S.E.	T Statistics	p-value	Path Coefficient	S.E.	T Statistics	p-value
Attitude toward the brand -> Purchase intentions	0.432*	0.212	2.039	0.042	0.189	0.198	0.953	0.341
Attitude toward the ad -> Purchase intentions	0.344*	0.154	2.240	0.026	0.271	0.160	1.698	0.090
Attitude toward the ad -> Attitude toward the brand	0.444*	0.090	4.942	0.000	0.450*	0.091	4.930	0.000
Attitude toward spokesperson -> Purchase intentions	-0.145	0.152	0.957	0.339	-0.010	0.184	0.052	0.959
Attitude toward spokesperson -> Attitude toward the brand	0.436*	0.112	3.907	0.000	0.324*	0.146	2.227	0.026
Attitude toward spokesperson -> Attitude toward the ad	0.425*	0.063	8.365	0.000	0.338*	0.159	2.128	0.034

*p < 0.05.

Taking into consideration Total Effects provided in the Table 7 below, it is evident that the model pertaining to the advertisement with celebrity spokesperson absolutely corresponds to the general model – all of the total effects are statistically significant: attitude toward the brand influences purchase intentions; attitude toward the ad influences purchase intentions and attitude toward the brand; attitude toward spokesperson influences attitudes toward the ad and the brand, and purchase intentions as well.

Table 7 Total Effects at models with different advertising spokespersons

Variables	Ad with celebrity spokesperson				Ad with non-celebrity spokesperson			
	Total Effect	S.E.	T Statistics	p-value	Total Effect	S.E.	T Statistics	p-value
Attitude toward the brand -> Purchase intentions	0.432*	0.212	2.037	0.042	0.189	0.196	0.965	0.335
Attitude toward the ad -> Purchase intentions	0.536*	0.100	5.358	0.000	0.356*	0.148	2.408	0.016
Attitude toward the ad -> Attitude toward the brand	0.444*	0.092	4.816	0.000	0.450*	0.101	4.456	0.000
Attitude toward spokesperson -> Purchase intentions	0.324*	0.115	2.816	0.005	0.172	0.141	1.224	0.222
Attitude toward spokesperson -> Attitude toward the brand	0.669*	0.069	9.719	0.000	0.476*	0.153	3.120	0.002
Attitude toward spokesperson -> Attitude toward the ad	0.524*	0.063	8.345	0.000	0.338*	0.170	1.995	0.047

*p < 0.05.

In contrast, the model pertaining to the advertisement with non-celebrity spokesperson contains two statistically non-significant total effects: attitude toward the brand has no impact on purchase intentions and attitude toward the spokesperson has no impact on purchase intentions at all. Attitude toward the ad is the only variable statistically significantly (but indirectly) influencing purchase intentions in the case of advertising with non-celebrity spokesperson.

Discussion, conclusions and recommendations

The statistical testing of research hypotheses substantiates the constructed theoretical model of the impact of spokesperson on advertising effectiveness, revealing that consumers' attitude towards advertisements that they are exposed to have an influence over their attitude towards the brand and purchase intention. The elaborated general model of the impact of spokesperson on advertising effectiveness (see Figure 2) illustrates the sequence of how advertising spokesperson influences consumers' purchase intentions.

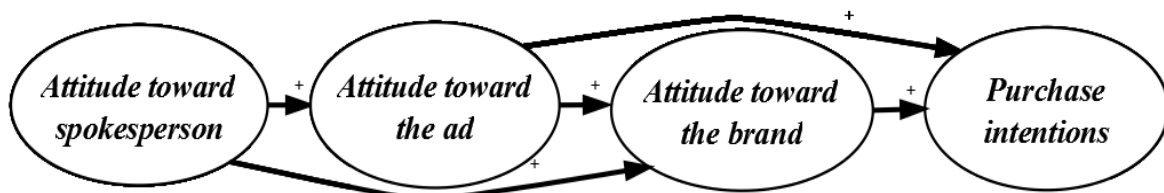
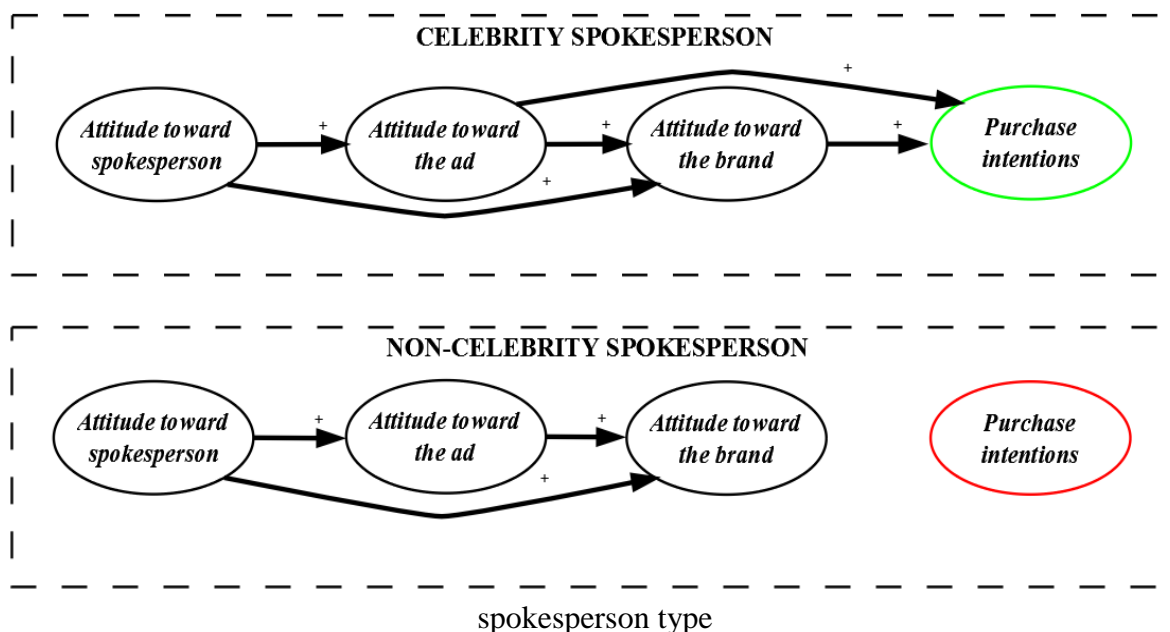


Figure 2 General model of the impact of spokesperson on advertising effectiveness

Attention to the advertisement forms attitude toward the specific presented spokesperson. If formed attitude toward the spokesperson is positive, it positively and directly influences attitude toward the brand and attitude toward the advertisement, which in turn influences attitude toward the brand as well. Enhanced attitudes toward the advertisement and toward the brand positively and directly influence consumers' purchase intentions. When the aim of advertising campaign is to impact consumers' behavior, then the advertising is effective if at least consumers' purchase intentions increase due to the advertising campaign. Consequently, as the research results revealed, advertising spokesperson enhances the possibility of advertising effectiveness. Nevertheless, different advertising spokespersons have different influences on advertising effectiveness (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 The impact of spokesperson on advertising effectiveness modelled by



The analysis of the research results revealed that celebrity spokesperson in advertising leads to enhanced level of consumers' purchase intentions through the formation of positive attitudes towards the advertisement and the brand. The sequence of how celebrity spokesperson influences consumers' purchase intentions corresponds to the general model of the impact of spokesperson on advertising effectiveness. Non-celebrity spokesperson does not lead to enhanced level of consumers' purchase intentions. Though non-celebrity spokesperson influences the formation of positive attitudes towards the advertisement and the brand, none of these variables have impact on the level of purchase intentions.

Consequently, research results provide the answer to the scientific problem: how to choose a spokesperson for advertising to be effective? If seeking advertising effectiveness expressed as enhanced level of consumers' purchase intentions, then the choice of celebrity spokesperson improves the possibility of creating effective advertising. On the other hand, if influencing consumers' behavior is not the aim of advertising campaign (e.g., the aim of advertising campaign is to improve brand awareness); moreover, bearing in mind high risk of vampire effect associated with using celebrities in advertising, non-

celebrity spokesperson (i.e., regular consumer) might be more effective than some well-known person.

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