

# THE CELEBRITY ENDORSER AND PRODUCT IMAGES: TO BE OR NOT TO BE CONGRUENT? TWO PERSPECTIVES FROM MATCH-UP HYPOTHESIS AND MANDLER'S MODEL

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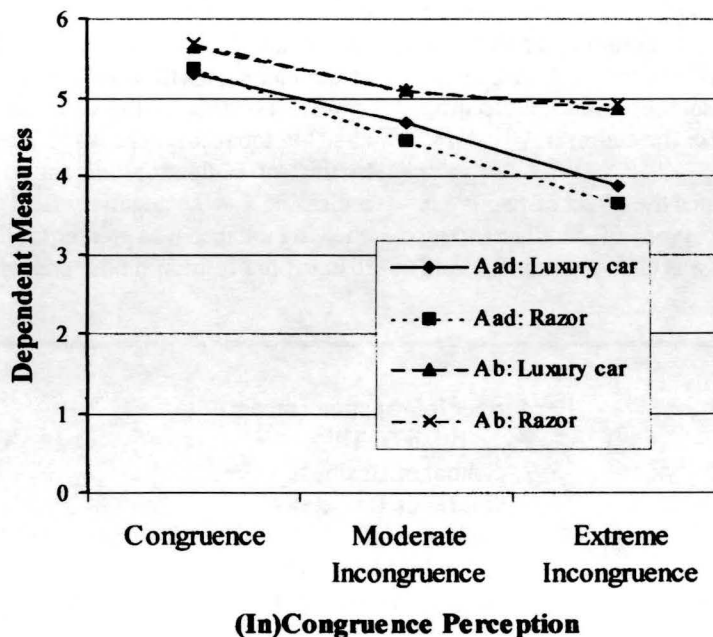
## ABSTRACT

While past studies have focused on the dichotomy of a match and mismatch between celebrity-product images, we examined the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement advertising across three levels of celebrity-product image congruence: congruence, moderate incongruence and extreme incongruence. Two rival hypotheses were developed based on the match-up hypothesis and Mandlers' model. The match-up hypothesis (Kahle and Homer 1985) suggests that convergence between celebrity images and product characteristics is required for effective advertisements. Therefore, a congruent pair is expected to generate more favorable evaluations than a moderately or an extremely incongruent pair. On the other hand, Mandler (1982) posits that the process of resolving incongruence leads to relatively more positive affect than that elicited by schema congru-

ence. When an incongruence cannot be resolved as with extreme incongruence, typically feelings of frustration and helplessness are stimulated and negative evaluations are elicited. Therefore, based upon Mandler's model, a moderately incongruent pair is expected to lead to more favorable evaluations than either a congruent or an extremely incongruent pair.

A 3 (celebrity-product (in)congruence: congruence, moderate incongruence, and extreme incongruence) by 2 (product category: luxury car and razor) between-subject experimental design was employed to examine which of these two theories held. The (in)congruence was manipulated by matching three celebrities that were judged (in pretests) to represent different levels of image congruence with the two product categories. Although we were relatively successful in manipulating the levels of (in)congruence, the results could not confirm any of the

**FIGURE 1**  
Aad and Ab as a Function of Perceived Ratings of Product-Celebrity (In)Congruence



rival hypotheses. However, a closer examination of the congruence manipulations revealed that the celebrities were not uniformly perceived as desired by all subjects in each of the six cells. Since the key conceptual background of the rival hypotheses is the prediction of different response patterns based on perceptions of different levels of (in)congruity, further analyses were conducted by regrouping the subjects using the perceived level of (in)congruity between the celebrity-product pairs. Results based on subjects' perceived levels of (in)congruence suggested that subjects who perceived the images between celebrity and endorsed product as congruent produced more favorable ad attitude (Aad) and brand attitude (Ab) than those who perceived them as moderately or extremely incongruent, supporting the prediction from the match-up hypothesis.

The result of this study provides further evidence in

support of the match-up hypothesis of celebrity advertising. However, the failure to confirm the response pattern from the original experimental design suggests that a celebrity endorsement advertisement's audience should not be treated as homogeneous. Individual differences among the audience members should be considered in selecting the most effective celebrity endorser. Therefore, research that investigates how many of the target customers perceive a potential celebrity as congruent with the product image and determines who those people are is imperative before million-dollar contracts are signed. Also, discovering factors that may contribute to individual differences in the perception of congruence images warrants future research. Research in this direction will provide us additional insights on how individuals may respond differently to various levels of product-celebrity image congruence.

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