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Impact of celebrity endorsement in advertising on brand image among Chinese adolescents

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Abstract

Purpose – Does celebrity endorsement work and how does it work among adolescents?

This article aims to identify attributes of celebrity endorsers and attributes of celebrity endorsement advertisements that are most appealing to the adolescents. The article also examines adolescents' perceptions about how celebrity-endorsement advertisements work.

Method – A focus group study among 76 Chinese adolescents aged 13 to 19 was conducted. Interviewees were asked to identify the specific elements of advertisements using celebrity endorsement that were most appealing to them. They were asked to suggest how advertisements using celebrity endorsements work.

Findings – Results found that interviewees were best able to recall celebrity endorsers whom they considered attractive, funny and expressive. They identified popularity, a good image, and congruence between the celebrity's image and that of the brand as important factors for marketers to consider in selecting celebrity endorsers. A majority of the interviewees perceived that using a celebrity in an ad would increase brand awareness, attract the celebrity's fans, encourage trial, and enhance purchase confidence.

Research implications – A theoretical model on how advertisements using celebrity endorsements work from the point-of-view of adolescents was constructed.

Originality/value – Previous studies on celebrity endorsement have been mainly quantitative in nature. The present study adopts qualitative methodology and fills a gap in the literature.

Key words Communication effects, Brand image, Adolescents, Hong Kong, Focus group studies

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

“Joey Yung was very busy these days. After winning the one of Top Ten Local Artistes awards she was hired to endorse Sensa Cools herbal drink. Inside sources report that her advertising contract was worth one million US dollars. What’s more, the advertisement was shot at an extravagant hotel in Phuket, Thailand” (Enesis Group, 2011). News such as this about celebrity involvement in product endorsements appears frequently in the Hong Kong entertainment news. Newspapers obviously perceive that their audience is interested in the commercial activities of media celebrities.

Celebrity endorsement is a common marketing communication strategy for building brand image. Advertisers believe that the use of a celebrity affects advertising effectiveness, brand recall and recognition, as well as purchase intentions and follow-through (Spry *et al.*, 2011). There have been many studies of celebrity endorsement in recent years (e.g., Hakimi *et al.*, 2011; Hung *et al.*, 2011; Spry *et al.*, 2011). These studies have examined the influence of celebrity endorsement on young adults (Hakimi *et al.*, 2011), celebrity worship on purchase intentions (Hung *et al.*, 2011), and the celebrity’s credibility on the brand’s consumer-based equity (Spry *et al.*, 2011). However, none of these studies has focused only on adolescents, although many advertisements targeting adolescents employ celebrity appeal (Chan, 2010). Most of the empirical studies about celebrity endorsement have been quantitative in nature. Only few studies applied qualitative method to explore impact of celebrity endorsement in advertising (e.g., Tantisenepong *et al.*, 2012). Use of qualitative method uncovers factors that may be overlooked in quantitative surveys. For example, the role of personal liking was found a critical factor in celebrity endorsement (Tantisenepong *et al.*, 2012). How do adolescents interact with advertisements using celebrity endorsement? Are they better able to identify

the brands endorsed by celebrities? What are the attributes of celebrities that they find most appealing? Do they perceive advertisements using a celebrity effective? This study was designed to answer these questions and seeks to fill a gap in the literature by focusing on adolescent consumers using qualitative methodology.

Understanding adolescent consumers' perception of celebrity endorsement appeals in advertising helps marketers to develop effective communication with adolescents.

Literature Review

Celebrity endorsement

Scholars have proposed several theories attempting to explain how celebrity endorsement in advertising works. McCracken (1989) has proposed a three-stage meaning transfer model. It proposes that an endorser's credibility and expertise first transfer meaning to his or her public image; the endorser then transfers the meaning to the brand being endorsed. Finally, the meaning is transferred to consumers. Celebrity endorsement enhances the perceived quality of the brand and is correlated with intention-to-use (e.g., Kamins *et al.*, 1989; Ohanian, 1991). Yoo and Donthu (2001) defined consumer-based brand equity as a combination of brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality of a brand, and meaningful memories linked to a brand. Celebrity endorsers who are credible improve brand credibility, and greater credibility increases consumer-based brand equity. The positive correlation between the endorser's credibility and consumer-based brand equity is mediated by the brand credibility (Spry *et al.*, 2011).

According to McCutcheon, Lange and Houran (2002), consumers' relationships with celebrities can be classified into two types. Entertainment-oriented individuals enjoy learning about celebrities and discussing the information with others casually, while intense-attachment based individuals think continuously and associate parasocially with the celebrities. Hung *et al.* (2011) found that entertainment-oriented consumers superficially evaluate the meaning transfer involved in a celebrity endorsement, while intense-attachment based consumers evaluate it carefully with detailed considerations. Another previous study delineated gender differences in attitudes toward celebrity endorsements. Female consumers responded more favorably to celebrity endorsements than males, and they preferred female celebrity endorsers to males (Klaus and Bailey, 2008).

Celebrities can be an influential reference group and therefore a powerful asset for marketers. Celebrities can give testimonials about the benefits of using a product, endorse a product, or act as a spokesperson for a brand for an extended period (Blackwell *et al.*, 2006). Marketers often choose celebrity endorsers who are attractive, credible, or who have expertise while at the same time matching up with the desired brand image (Hakimi *et al.*, 2011). Physically attractive celebrity endorsers can improve a brand's image and encourage consumers to purchase that brand (Hakimi *et al.*, 2011). Celebrities who are credible can persuade consumers to believe claims about a brand if they have relevant knowledge, skills or experience and are perceived to be unbiased (Ohanian, 1990). Knowledgeable and skillful celebrity endorsers who are perceived to have expertise in a particular area can make consumers more willing to purchase the advertised brand (Ohanian, 1991). The trustworthiness of the celebrity is a supportive element underlying source credibility, but research has shown that it is not a factor in increasing consumers'

intention to try a brand (Hakimi *et al.*, 2011; Ohanian, 1991). Research has shown that consumers expect congruity between a celebrity endorser's image and the brand being endorsed (O'Mahony and Meenaghan, 1997). Categorically related endorsements (sports shoes endorsed by a sportsman) have greater brand meaning consistency than unrelated endorsements (sports shoes endorsed by a singer) (Chien *et al.*, 2011). To conclude, the effectiveness of advertisements using celebrity appeals depends on four factors: attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness of the celebrities, and congruity between image of brand and the celebrity.

Adolescents and celebrity endorsement

Adolescent consumers have significant potential purchasing power (Bush *et al.*, 2004). They are known as Generation Y, which is an age group that differs from Generation X (their parents) in terms of values and conformity. Adolescence in this paper refers to the age group of 12 to 19 (Rice and Dolgin, 2005). Erikson (1968) has argued that adolescents form primary attachments to family and friends and secondary attachments to famous persons including media celebrities. During adolescence, celebrity figures are an important factor in self-concept development (Adams-Price and Greene, 1990). Adolescents perceive a celebrity as their ideal self-image and strive to develop personality traits, attitudes, values, and physical appearance similar to those of their idols (Boon and Lomore, 2001; Caughey, 1994).

Consumer socialization research has investigated children and adolescents' development as consumers (John, 1999). Adolescents at the reflective stage aged 11 to 16 understand persuasive intention of advertisements. They hold skeptical attitudes toward advertisements. They are aware of both adult-oriented and children-oriented brands as

well as underlying cues of brands. They understand consumption symbolism for brands and product categories (John, 1999).

Vicarious role models including favorite entertainers and athletes have conclusively been shown to influence American adolescents' consumption intentions and behavior (Martin and Bush, 2000). Sports celebrities have also been shown to generate positive word-of-mouth recommendations for brands, leading to purchase intention and follow-through among "generation Y" consumers in Australia (Buksa and Mitsis, 2011; Dix *et al.*, 2010). A similar positive relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention has also been demonstrated among Botswana teenagers in South Africa (Makgosa, 2010).

Most of the empirical studies of celebrity endorsement are quantitative in nature. In the celebrity endorsement literature, existing studies show lack of consensus in empirical findings and partial support of the existing main theoretical framework (Tantisenepong *et al.*, 2012). To contribute to the literature, the present study uses qualitative approach to generate insights of this target groups that are grounded empirically.

Celebrity endorsement in Hong Kong

Hong Kong's strong film, television and music industries provide a constant supply of popular singers and actors. A survey has found that teenagers in Hong Kong are likely to choose famous singers and movie stars as their idols (So and Chan, 1992). For example, popular Hong Kong singer Sammi Cheng has over 400,000 Facebook fans (Famecount, 2011). The use of celebrities in advertising is prevalent in Hong Kong. Advertisers and marketers in Hong Kong often employ celebrities such as popular singers, movie actors and actresses, as well as famous athletes as spokespersons for products and services that

target adolescents (Chan, 2010). Content analyses have found that celebrity endorsement was the most frequently used appeal in television commercials for youth products and was the second most frequently used appeal in youth magazine advertisements. Nearly half of the government's publicity campaigns employ celebrity endorsers as well (Chan, 2010).

A qualitative study found that the endorser was the most frequently mentioned reason for liking or disliking a television commercial among Hong Kong teenagers (Chan, 2010). The findings showed that adolescents recalled and liked celebrity endorsers who were singers, actors or football players because of their dancing skills, soccer skills or ostensibly good personality. Interviewees disliked celebrity endorsers whom they perceived as old or old-fashioned (Chan, 2010). A qualitative study of Hong Kong girls aged 10 to 12 found that they paid much attention to the private lives of media celebrities. They showed admiration for their specific talents and perceived personalities (Chan, 2011). A survey of Hong Kong adolescents found that the respondents expressed moderate levels of social comparison with media celebrities but low levels of imitation. The survey also found that imitation of celebrity and social comparison with media celebrities were positive correlates of the endorsements of materialistic values (Chan and Prendergast, 2008).

Hofstede (1984) argued that individualism is mostly valued in Western cultures such as US and European countries, while collectivism is often valued in Asian cultures such as Japan, Korea and Hong Kong. The differences between individualism and collectivism have been shown in advertisements. Collectivism values including sense of belonging and family are more likely to be reflected in Korea celebrity advertisements than in United States (Choi *et al.*, 2005). Consumers in Asians tend to follow mainstream.

Because celebrity equals to the meaning of popularity, the meaning would transfer to consumers and encourage them to purchase the endorsed brands (Choi *et al.*, 2005). As Hong Kong is an Asian city that values collectivism and is group-oriented to a certain extent, consumers in Hong Kong are expected to be more readily affected by advertisements using celebrity appeal.

Despite of the frequent use of celebrities in Hong Kong's advertising and the adolescents' strong interest in the celebrities, there is no study that investigates specific elements of celebrities in advertising that appeal the most to the adolescents. There is also no study from the point of view of adolescents on the impact of advertisements using celebrities. This study attempts to fill the gap.

Research objectives

In order to target adolescent consumers successfully, advertisers need to understand how adolescents respond to advertising using celebrity endorsement. The current study had the following research objectives:

1. to identify attributes of the celebrity endorsers in advertisements as well as attributes of these advertisements that the adolescents found most memorable;
2. to investigate factors that adolescents think marketers would consider in selecting celebrity endorsers; and to explore adolescents' perceptions about how advertisements using celebrity endorsement work.

Methods

The study employed an interpretivist approach (Neuman, 2003) using a qualitative methodology. A focus group format was adopted as it can best reconcile different

interviewees' perspectives and often generate insights that might not be generated in individual interviews (Silverman, 2005). The objective was to create a context in which meanings and perceptions associated with celebrity endorsements could be negotiated or shared.

Seventy-six Chinese adolescents aged 13 to 19 were divided into sixteen focus groups using quota sampling based on school grade and sex. The interviewees were recruited through personal networks. Interviewees of the same sex and same grade were grouped together to encourage free expression of perceptions about advertisements using celebrity endorsement. A total of thirty-eight interviewees were males and 38 were females. All of them were studying in forms 3 to 6 (equivalent to the American grades 9 to 12) in Hong Kong secondary schools.

There were five participants on average per group. A research methodology textbook suggested that the group size should be six to twelve participants (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006). However, there is also suggestion that an optimal group should consist of five respondents because they can provide greater depth of response in smaller group sessions (Debus, 1988).

Senior university students taking the course 'Consumer Behavior' served as moderators of the focus groups. They were trained by the instructors on the moderating techniques. Two moderators administered each interview. The average duration of the focus group sessions was 33.6 minutes. The focus groups were conducted at secondary school campuses and public places such as fast food restaurants. The study was conducted in Cantonese in October and November 2011.

A warm-up question and three carefully worded open-ended questions were used to guide the sessions (for translations, see Appendix 1). The participants can give multiples

responses. The session started by showing a board displaying four full-color snapshots extracted from then-current TV commercials using celebrity endorsers. All four commercials had been broadcast repeatedly in evening prime time within the previous six months. These commercials featured popular local celebrities endorsing product categories that interviewees were familiar with, for example, confectionary. Brand identifications were removed in the snapshots. As a warm-up, the interviewees were asked to identify the endorsers shown and to recall the brands they were endorsing in those advertisements. It is not intended to be a quantitative measure of recognition and brand name recall.

An audio recording of each session was later transcribed in Chinese and selected quotes were translated into English by the authors. The English translations of the quotes were agreed upon by all authors. Throughout the analysis, Marshall and Rossman's (1999) comparison analysis method was used to link data by constantly comparing and contrasting statements (Strauss, 1987). Without imposing any themes, the full transcripts were read through once, and then they were read through again and notes were made of possible emerging themes. The data were then compared to the themes. Once a statement had been coded under a certain theme, it was removed. The process of reading, coding and refining the themes continued until no further statements remained to be coded and the list of themes had stabilized. Because of the small size and the non-random sampling method, the qualitative results can only be considered exploratory. Therefore, they were not analyzed by age or sex.

Results

In response to the warm-up question, most groups were able to identify all the celebrities

featured in the commercials as well as the brand names of the products they endorsed.

Because the participants can give multiples responses, the responses to the following three questions are not equal to the numbers of participants or the number of focus groups.

Most memorable celebrity endorser

The interviewees were requested to discuss their most memorable celebrity endorsers and the attributes of the celebrity that created such a deep impression. A total of twenty-two memorable celebrity endorsers were reported. Fifteen of them were males and seven were females. Twenty of them were local Chinese and two were Japanese. Nearly all of them were media celebrities. Media celebrities in this context refer to popular singers, actors and fashion models. Male viewers are more likely to recall a celebrity endorser of the same gender, but female viewers are about equally likely to recall male or female celebrity endorsers. Among the products involved in those memorable endorsements, the most frequently reported was Broadway, a consumer electronics retail chain. The second most mentioned brand was PCCW, a local telecommunications provider. The others were mainly food and beverage brands. Nearly all interviewees were able to recall the brand names in the commercials with the most memorable celebrity endorser.

A local female singer, Joey Yung, was the one endorser most frequently mentioned, and that was in connection with her endorsement of Broadway. The interviewees found her the most memorable because she had been endorsing Broadway for six years. Two interviewees pointed out that she sang a new song for each commercial, which made the advertisements impressive. A female participant said,

“Teenagers enjoy listening to music. They can remember the song after hearing it a few times. The songs just slip off their tongues. It helps to promote the brand.”
(Female, form 3)

The second most memorable endorser was a local male television actor, Moses Chan.

Interviewees commented that he had a good appearance and acting skills. In fact he is known as Hong Kong's "ratings king" because of the top audience rating of the drama series in which he plays a leading role. One female interviewee reported that because of his good presentation in the PCCW advertisements, consumers perceived the quality of the service to be high. Another female interviewee thought the script of the ad was interesting,

"Moses Chan's Saint Honore Snowy Mooncake advertisement is funny. He said he knows how to be a 'cool' guy, but Saint Honore Snowy Mooncake is really 'cool'." (Female, form 3)

The third most memorable endorser was a local male singer, Eason Chan. Interviewees reported that they liked his songs and found him to be funny. His endorsements of Sugus Chewy Candy and Dequadin lozenges were considered memorable because of their funny scripts.

In all three cases, interviewees demonstrated that they could recall details of the advertisements, including their appeal, the music, and even the phrases or words used by the endorsers. It went far beyond just recalling the name of the brand being endorsed.

Table 1 summarizes the reasons the interviewees reported for finding the endorsements memorable. They most frequently mentioned the endorsers' attractive appearance, funny apparel or expressions, and good acting. They also enjoyed any singing or dancing by the endorsers in the commercials. That the celebrity had been endorsing a particular brand for a lengthy period of time was the third most mentioned reason for an endorsement being memorable. Other reasons were that the dialogue or animation was funny, the ad was creative, it was persuasive, or the jingle was memorable.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Factors that marketers should consider in selecting celebrity endorsers

The interviewees were asked to suggest what factors marketers should consider in selecting celebrity endorsers. The answers are summarized in Table 2. The interviewees most frequently reported popularity, positive image, and the match between the celebrity and the brand as important factors. Popularity was felt to be very important. The interviewees perceived that famous celebrities would attract their supporters and other consumers to buy the endorsed product or service. A female interviewee said it was vital to use a celebrity at the peak of his or her career, for example when he or she had just received a music award. An interviewee stated:

“You know, Eason Chan is very famous, so consumers may think the advertisement is convincing. And, they may think what he says is believable and trustworthy. If the advertisers find someone that people don’t know who he or she is, people would not have a deep impression and would wonder if he or she is trustworthy.” (Female, form 6)

A positive image tied with popularity as the most frequently mentioned factor in selecting a celebrity endorser. Interviewees perceived that a celebrity should have a positive image, which a female student defined as a healthy image not involved in any scandal. Here are two quotes:

“Jackie Chan has a positive and healthy image. He is a world-known action movie star. He cares about the society, making contributions to help the needy. He is nice.” (Male, form 3)

“The singer Edison Chan endorsed a brand of fashion tee-shirt and jean. As he is a bad guy involved in a sex scandal, I don’t think his brand is of any good.” (Male, form 6)

Congruence between the images of the celebrity and the brand was the third most frequently mentioned factor. Here is an illustrative quote,

“I watched an advertisement that Wong Kam-po endorsed a health product. As a racing cyclist, he gets tendonitis easily. It is convincing when he endorses a health product. What’s more, he is the first Chinese World Champion cyclist. However, if he endorses cookies, I don’t want to watch it. There should be a relationship between the images of the celebrity and the brand.” (Male, form 6)

One interviewee reported that marketers would choose a mature man for endorsing

beer, but a female celebrity known to love kids for endorsing a baby formula milk brand. Interviewees perceived that the age of the celebrity endorser and the target consumers should also be congruent. For example, “You won’t ask an oldie TV actor to endorse a brand of jeans,” commented a male interviewee.

Physical appearance and talent were also mentioned as important factors. Interviewees put special emphasis on the acting, singing and dancing talents of the celebrities. The participants less frequently brought up cost as a factor in selecting celebrity endorsers.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

The impact of using celebrity endorsers

The interviewees were asked to suggest how employing celebrity endorsers in advertisements would work for the brand. This is another way of asking the perceived effect of celebrity endorsement on the brand. Table 3 summarizes the results. The interviewees reported that using a celebrity in an advertisement would increase brand awareness, encourage trial, attract supporters as well as fans to try the brand, and enhance the brand’s image. Interviewees frequently suggested that celebrity endorsers would increase brand awareness. For example, an interviewee said he used to pay no attention to one brand of candy, but when a local male pop singer endorsed the brand in a new commercial he started to notice it. “It is an opportunity for consumers to know a brand,” commented another interviewee. One interviewee said he would not pay any attention to a brand if the endorser was not a celebrity. In the words of one interviewee:

“For the first time I did not watch the first half of an advertisement and I just watched the second half. Because the product is endorsed by a celebrity and because of his attractiveness, I paid more attention to the advertisement. I watched the ad a few more times. My deeper impression causes me to try the product. For example, when I need to buy a toothbrush, I remember the endorsed brand of the toothbrush.”
(Female, form 3)

Interviewees also often mentioned that celebrity endorsers encourage trial. One interviewee pointed out that consumers are more likely to consider a brand if a renowned celebrity says good things about it. Here are two illustrative quotes:

“People come to know the brand through the celebrity. It affects the overall impression toward the brand. People are more willing to try the brand if it was endorsed by a celebrity.” (Male, form 5)

“People know nothing about the product when a brand is launched. If the brand employs a popular celebrity to endorse the product, people may want to know more about it. They will also be more willing to try the brand.” (Female, form 3)

These two quotes illustrate that the interviewees perceive brands as strangers and brands need familiar characters such as celebrities to serve as mediators to establish contact with the target consumers.

The third most frequently reported effect was that celebrity endorsers attract their fans to try the brand. This response is similar to the previous response about encouraging trial, but it puts the emphasis on the group of consumers perceived to be most likely to be influenced by a celebrity—his or her fans. Here is a typical quote:

“If I like the celebrity endorser and I am his or her fan, I may share the endorsed brand with my friends. In this way, I become an advocate for the brand.” (Female, form 4)

Interviewees reported that using celebrity endorsers would enhance a brand’s image or buying confidence. They perceived that only strong and profitable brands could afford to employ celebrities. They also believed that only reputable brands would be able to convince a top notch celebrity to serve as an endorser. Several interviewees commented that consumers would feel confident to use brands endorsed by celebrity endorsers. A male interviewee believed that celebrity endorsers can rejuvenate a brand. He said,

“I used to perceive a brand of chocolate as traditional. When a young celebrity endorsed the brand, I changed my mind and think that the brand matches the taste of teenagers. I almost think it is a new brand.” (Male, form 4)

[Insert Table 3 about here]

Discussion

This focus group study conducted among Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong revealed, first, that adolescents value highly the entertainment skills of media celebrities. The adolescent interviewees reported that their most memorable celebrities were attractive, funny and expressive. In essence, the celebrities were able to transfer their entertainment value to the brand they were endorsing. This finding is consistent with that of a previous study that the most liked attribute of television commercials in Hong Kong was “entertaining” (Fam, 2008). The importance of entertainment value echoes the finding that Hong Kong adolescents recall best and like best celebrity endorsers who are singers or actors because of their perceived good personality, singing and dancing skills (Chan, 2010). The findings are consistent with previous findings about “generation Y” consumers in mainland China who were found to enjoy reading about and watching entertainment celebrities, as well as discussing news about their lives with their friends (Hung *et al.*, 2011). In other words, celebrities in advertising are perceived as a form of entertainment and material for social conversations. Unlike other age groups, the current study shows that adolescents are predominantly attracted by celebrity endorsers that are entertaining and attractive (Hakimi *et al.*, 2011; Kahle and Homer, 1985; Till and Busler, 1998) rather than those who are expertise (Ohanian, 1990; 1991) or trustworthy (Hakimi *et al.*, 2011; Ohanian, 1991).

The interviewees demonstrated a high level of knowledge about the commercial operation of celebrity endorsement. They had no difficulty identifying correctly factors that marketers would consider in selecting celebrity endorsers. The importance of the celebrity’s popularity and physical attractiveness seem to suggest that familiarity and

source attractiveness are what make celebrities effective endorsers (Hakimi *et al.*, 2011). The current study revealed that positive images and congruence between image of celebrity and brand are important to adolescents. It supports Thwaites *et al.*'s (2012) finding that negative publicity affects attractiveness and credibility of celebrity endorsers negatively. Factors such as quantitative estimates of followers, price, whether the endorsement deal would be exclusive or not can be more important to the marketers than those mentioned by the interviewees. Comparison of interviewees' transcripts found that they focus more on possible communication effects of celebrity endorsement and less on financial consideration in endorsement deals. There was sufficient evidence that interviewees were able to understand the commercial practices of celebrity endorsement. The adolescents' sophisticated knowledge of celebrity endorsement as an advertising appeal was in line with John's (1999) model of consumer socialization. At the reflective stage (age 11–16), consumers are expected to have a fully developed understanding of the persuasive intent of advertisements, as well as of special advertising appeals, including celebrity appeal. None of the interviewees mentioned product expertise as important. This suggests that celebrities are effective not because of their expertise but simply because of their familiarity.

These adolescents perceived that advertisements using celebrity endorsement influence consumers' brand awareness, brand perceptions, and consumption intentions. These beliefs were presumably based primarily on personal experience and observation. Interviewees discussed about the use of celebrity endorsements to change the perceived target market. The finding was consistent with a study that interviewees acknowledge a celebrity's role in repositioning a brand to fit a new target market (Tantisenepong *et al.*, 2012). It is interesting to note that celebrity appeal is perceived to enhance purchase

confidence again not because of the expertise of the celebrity (Ohanian, 1990; 1991), but because of their attractiveness (Kahle and Homer, 1985; Till and Busler, 1998). Celebrity likeability and congruence between endorser and the endorsed brand influence predisposition toward the advertisements, which in turn affect attitude toward the brand and purchase intention (Fleck *et al.*, 2012). The purchase confidence comes from the credibility and profitability attached to employing a celebrity as an endorser. Adolescents perceived that celebrities would be able to say no to an endorsement invitation if the brand did not match their (presumably) high standards. This result demonstrates that these adolescents were able to consider the whole celebrity endorsement issue from the marketer's as well as the celebrity's point of view. The finding was consistent with John's (1999) model that adolescents at the reflective stage understand fully the persuasive intent of advertisements (John, 1999). None of the interviewees showed explicit skepticism about advertisements using celebrity endorsement. This may be because perceived truthfulness of advertisements using celebrities was not explicitly surveyed in the current study. Nevertheless, a few interviewees commented that celebrity appeals may not be as effective as other advertising appeals such as an informative appeal. Hong Kong adolescent consumers' purchase intention can be influenced by favorite entertainers, which is similar to American adolescents (Martin and Bush, 2000).

These findings suggest a theoretical framework for how celebrity endorsements affect adolescents. The same model may not be applicable to other age groups. The proposed theoretical model is shown in Figure 1. The celebrity endorser's attributes, including physical appearance, expressions and talent, combine with attributes of the advertisement including the dialogue, the persuasiveness of the message and the jingle to help establish a favorable brand image among adolescents. The positive brand image will in turn play a

role in increasing brand awareness, encouraging trial, and enhancing purchase confidence. According to the model, celebrity endorsement can help a brand with a vague image establish an image that is clear and likeable through combining an attractive media celebrity with creative ad content. Further study might profitably test this model using a quantitative methodology.

Pervious quantitative studies found that the effectiveness of the celebrity endorsement depends on three constructs of the source including expertise, attractiveness and trustworthiness. Our findings among adolescents found that attractiveness and entertainment value of the source play a critical role. The marketing implication is that marketers need to select celebrities that are most attractive and believed to be most entertaining to adolescents instead of finding celebrities that are credible and trustful.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Limitations and further studies

There are several limitations of the present study. First of all, the interviewees were asked to identify the endorsers shown and to recall the brands as a warm-up question. As all the celebrities in the prompt are local popular singers and TV stars, the interviewees may be encouraged to pay notice of these types of celebrities. Future study can include global celebrities and athletics in the prompt. Second, the current study adopted convenience sampling that participants were recruited through personal network. The findings cannot be generalized to the population.

Based on the results, we propose the following directions for future studies.

1. The theoretical model can be put to test using a quantitative methodology
2. Further studies can be designed to examine if adolescents of different age group, gender and societies will respond to advertisements using celebrities differently

3. Further studies can be designed to examine if adolescents respond to advertisements using global, regional, or local celebrities differently.

To conclude, the present study contributes to the existing literature that examines impact of celebrity endorsement in advertising among Chinese adolescent by using qualitative methodology. Hong Kong adolescents were best able to recall celebrity endorsers whom they considered attractive, funny or particularly expressive. The adolescents demonstrated a sophisticated knowledge of the commercial operation of celebrity endorsements. They believed in the effectiveness of celebrity advertising appeals in changing consumers' brand awareness and purchase intentions. A theoretical model on how advertisements using celebrity endorsements work from the point of view of adolescents was constructed.

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Table 1. Reasons for memorable endorsers

Reason	<u>Frequency of mentions</u>
Attractive appearance; funny apparel or expressions; good acting skills	12
Enjoy the singing or the dancing of the endorser in the commercial	8
The celebrity has been the endorser for a particular brand for a long period of time	7
Funny dialogue / animation; the ad was innovative / persuasive	6
The jingle was memorable	4
The celebrity is famous	3
Congruence between the image of the celebrity and the brand	1

Note: Participants can give multiples responses.

Table 2. Factors that marketers would consider in selecting celebrity endorsers

Factor	Frequency of mentions
Popularity	15
Image	15
Congruence between the image of the celebrity and the brand	9
Physical appearance and talents	8
Cost	3
Congruence between the age of the celebrity and target consumers	2

Note: Participants can give multiples responses.

Table 3. Perceived impacts of celebrity endorsement

Impact	Frequency of mentions
Increase brand awareness	10
Encourage trial	10
Attract fans to try the brand	9
Enhance brand image / purchase confidence	9
Enlarge the youth market	1
Internationalize the brand	1
Renew brand image	1
Attract people to watch the ad	1

Note: Participants can give multiples responses.