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Attractive or Credible Celebrities: Who Endorses Green Products Better?

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to measure the impact of celebrity endorsement type (celebrity credibility and attractiveness) and product type (for durable and non-durable product) on attitude towards green advertisement. For this purpose, a 2x2 between subjects factorial design experimental study was utilized. Two different product categories refrigerator (durable) and milk (non-durable) and two different types of celebrities Hülya Avşar (Attractive) and Şener Şen (Attractive) were selected. In order to test the study a Two-Way Factorial ANOVA analysis was used. The results indicated there was a main effect of both product and celebrity type on the attitude towards advertising. In addition, the results indicated that credibility and attractiveness of a celebrity did matter for different types of products. Attitude toward green advertisement increased when the celebrity was credible for milk (nondurable product), and higher for attractive celebrity in refrigerator (durable product).

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1. Introduction

Public concern about environmental problems increased over past decades. Together with awareness about environmental issues, people's tendency to seek and purchase green products has increased as part of consumers' green movement to conserve the environment. "Green or Environmental Marketing consists of all activities designed

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to generate and facilitate any exchange intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment” (Polonsky, 1994, p: 2). Green marketing lead marketers to make a connection between their products and the environment; and consequently lead people to buy these products (Banerjee, Gulas and Iyer, 1995; Stone and Wakefield, 2000). This study aims to understand the impact of celebrity endorsement on green advertisement effectiveness. More specifically it aims to measure the impact of celebrity credibility and attractiveness on attitude towards green advertisement (for durable and non-durable product categories). Lutz (1985) defines attitude toward advertisement as the tendency to respond to a special advertisement message in desirable or not desirable manner, during a particular exposure time.

Marketers in order to position the green products in consumers’ mind utilize some methods. Green advertisement is among these methods. Green advertisement can be defined as “any ad that explicitly or implicitly addresses the relationship between a product/service and the biophysical environment, promotes a green lifestyle with or without highlighting a products/service and presents a corporate image of environmental responsibility” (Banerjee *et al.*, 1995, p: 22). The major purpose of green advertisements is to convince households to buy and use environmentally friend products / services in their daily life, which claim to be as not harmful for the ecosystem (Tehrani and Sinha, 2011). However, the credibility of these advertisements is questionable from consumers’ perspective (Rahbar and Wahid, 2011; Leonidou *et al.*, 2011).

Celebrity endorsement is a common method in improving the advertisements’ effectiveness. Most of researches explore the role of celebrities in increasing message effectiveness and purchase intention. Marketers utilize the image and identification of the endorsers in order to promote the image of the product or the producer company (Atkin and Block, 1983). Thus, the aim of the research is to understand whether celebrity endorsement may have a positive impact upon green advertisement effectiveness, and can be suggested as a method to be used in green marketing/ advertising.

This study has been conducted in Turkey, an emerging market with rising concern towards green marketing. Research by Turkey Sustainability Academy, in January 2014 in 15 provinces of Turkey investigated the level of “green and eco-friendly consumption behavior” (www.surdurulebilirlikakademisi.com, 2016) showed that most of respondents confirmed that there is an increase in their green purchase behavior compared to the past. Therefore, it is timely and necessary to conduct research on the effectiveness of green advertising in this country, which is identified as an attractive market because of its young and consuming population.

2. Green Advertising

Grillo *et al.* (2008) indicated that green advertisement has crucial role in communicating green image along with making use of environmental consciousness among consumers and organizations. These messages try to make a connection between the advertised product and environment and consequently lead people to buy these products (Banerjee *et al.*, 1995). There are some terms, which are visible in these kinds of advertisements like recyclable, ozone safe, ecological, non-toxic, environmentally friendly and biodegradable (Jogi and Ghosh, 2014).

There are different categorizations for environmental advertisements in previous studies (Kangun *et al.*, 1991; Banerjee *et al.*, 1995). These categorizations have been conducted in accordance to degree of believability evaluated by audience’s perception. For instance Kangun *et al.* (1991) categorized green advertisements into ambiguous, omission, false/lying and acceptable. In addition, Banerjee *et al.* (1995) classified these ads into three groups as shallow, moderate and deep (Purohit, 2012). Even though there has been research to understand the effectiveness of green advertisement on consumer responses (e.g.; D’Souza, 2005; Rahbar and Wahid, 2011; Leonidou *et al.*, 2011), the impact of celebrity endorsement on green advertising is a rather disregarded area in green advertising. A study by Dutta and Singh (2013) explored how celebrity endorsers can be employed by the healthy food industry to influence the customers. The findings showed that celebrity endorsements play an important role in influencing purchase of healthy food brands by the Indian housewives.

3. Celebrity Endorsement

Friedman and Friedman (1979) defined celebrity endorser as a person who is reputed to the public for her/his prosperity in some fields other than of product class endorsed. Gupta (2009) defined celebrity as a person, whose name and image can attract people's attention, interest, and generate profit from the public. Endorsement is a way of backing, support or approval from a third party or a spokesperson. Celebrities can be assumed as reference groups, which consumers follow when they intend to purchase an item (Solomon *et al.*, 2006). Marketers use celebrity endorsement as a promotional strategy in launching new products, repositioning brands or reinforcing brand images (Erdogan et al, 2001; Ohanian, 1991). The endorsement method has become very popular in recent decades due to its positive impact on consumer's purchase intention (Stafford *et al.*, 2003). Researchers have tried to present some models in order to help companies in finding appropriate endorser for their advertisements. Source Credibility Model (Hovland *et al.*, 1953; Ohanian, 1991), Source Attractiveness Model (McGuire, 1985) are among the most famous and accepted models in celebrity endorsement.

According to source credibility model, effectiveness of message depends on perceived level of expertise and trustworthiness in celebrity endorser (Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1991). Hovland et al (1953) defines trustworthiness as the degree of confidence in the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions he/she considers the most valid. Trustworthiness is related to the honesty, integrity and believability of the endorser (McGinnies and Ward, 1980; Ohanian, 1990). Expertise, on the other hand, is the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions (Hovland et al., 1953). Expertise is derived from one's knowledge of the subject (McGinnies and Ward, 1980). Celebrity endorser's credibility regarding expertise and trustworthiness are the best stimuli for the audiences to assess the advertisement, which celebrity endorsers present (Lord and Putrevu, 2009; Pornpitakan, 2004). Highly credible endorsers are more successful in attitude change, message recall, and behavioral response compared to less credible ones (Sternthal *et al.*, 1978; McGinnies and Ward, 1980).

Attractiveness is related to how likable or physically attractive the source is to the audience (Ohanian, 1991). Drawing from social psychology, attractiveness has four key determinants as familiarity, similarity, likeability and attractiveness to the individual (McGuire, 1985). McGuire (1958) proposes source attractiveness as one of source credibility dimensions, but there are other researchers who studied the impact of attractiveness of endorsers separately on products, services and social causes (e.g.; Caballero *et al.*, 1989; DeSarbo *et al.*, 1985).

4. Methodology

Primary objective of this study is to understand the effects of celebrity endorsers on enhancing the effectiveness of green messages. For this purpose, a 2x2 between subjects factorial design experimental study was utilized. Two different product categories were used: durable (white goods/ refrigerator) and non-durable (milk). Two different types of celebrities were selected: Hulya Avsar and Sener Sen. The celebrities were selected according to two research done for Mediacat Company in Turkey about celebrities (posta.com.tr; milliyet.com.tr). Flavee has been chosen as the brand name for both of the products. Green advertisements have been designed in the same way for both of these products. "We care about you and environment" is used as the slogan on the image advertisements.

All measures of independent and dependent variables are adapted or developed based on the literature based on the mentioned objectives of this study (Table 3); where all English items were translated into Turkish; and the final questionnaire were tested on a pilot sample of 30 people to measure its understandability and clarity. Two items from D'Souza's study measured attitude towards ad. 16 items from Ohanian (1991)'s study measured source trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness.

Target population of the study consisted of males and females in the age group 15-70 living in Istanbul. Convenience sampling, a non-probabilistic sampling method was used to reach the target population. 18 has been determined as the minimum acceptable age since respondents below the age of 18 may lack authority in purchase decisions and complexity of the subject and the questions could create difficulty. 240 self-administrated questionnaires were distributed and collected in Istanbul at shopping centers, restaurants and open entertainment areas.

5. Findings

A t-test was run to assess the credibility and attractiveness of the celebrities from the respondents’ point of view. The results are given in Table 1 and 2. Accordingly, in all tests, the mean of measured factor is different for both of the endorsers, and this difference is significant statistically. For Trustworthiness and expertise factors, this mean is significantly higher for Şener Şen compared to Hülya Avşar, but for attractiveness factor, this mean is significantly higher for Hülya Avşar. Thus, these celebrities can be used in factorial design to assess credibility versus attractiveness.

Table 1. Group Statistics for Assessing Celebrity Credibility and Attractiveness

| | Kind of Advertiser | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----|--------|----------------|
| Trustworthiness | Sener Sen | 100 | 3.8320 | 0.73014 |
| | Hulya Avsar | 100 | 2.4480 | 0.92512 |
| Expertise | Sener Sen | 100 | 2.5660 | 0.85472 |
| | Hulya Avsar | 100 | 2.0980 | 0.79569 |
| Attractive | Sener Sen | 100 | 2.5220 | 0.74394 |
| | Hulya Avsar | 100 | 3.0220 | 0.95722 |

Table 2. Independent Samples Test between 3 Variables

| | T-test for Equality of Means | | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|---|----------|
| | T | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Trustworthiness | 11.743 | 198 | <0.001 | 1.384 | 1.15159 | 1.61641 |
| Expertise | 4.008 | 198 | <0.001 | 0.468 | 0.23771 | 0.69829 |
| Attractiveness | -4.124 | 198 | <0.001 | -0.500 | -0.73907 | -0.26093 |

A Two-Way Factorial ANOVA test had been accomplished secondly to test the integrated data set for the factorial design. The results have been summarized in following tables:

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Integrated Data

| Dependent Variable: Attitude Towards Green Advertising | | | | |
|--|-------------|--------|----------------|-----|
| Product Type | Celebrity | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
| Milk | Sener Sen | 3.3900 | .82863 | 50 |
| | Hulya Avsar | 2.7000 | 1.12938 | 50 |
| | Total | 3.0450 | 1.04470 | 100 |
| Refrigrator | Sener Sen | 3.3200 | .91339 | 50 |
| | Hulya Avsar | 3.3600 | .96384 | 50 |
| | Total | 3.3400 | .93441 | 100 |
| Total | Sener Sen | 3.3550 | .86834 | 100 |
| | Hulya Avsar | 3.0300 | 1.09595 | 100 |

| | | | |
|-------|--------|--------|-----|
| Total | 3.1925 | .99959 | 200 |
|-------|--------|--------|-----|

Table 3 displays the means and standard deviations of ‘Attitude toward Advertisement’ in related sub-groups.

Table 4. Two-Way ANOVA Tests

| Dependent Variable: Attitude towards Green Advertising | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|-------------|
| Source | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Corrected Model | 16.294 ^a | 3 | 5.431 | 5.832 | .001 |
| Intercept | 2038.411 | 1 | 2038.411 | 2188.658 | .000 |
| Product Type | 4.351 | 1 | 4.351 | 4.672 | .032 |
| Celebrity | 5.281 | 1 | 5.281 | 5.671 | .018 |
| Product Type * Celebrity | 6.661 | 1 | 6.661 | 7.152 | .008 |
| Error | 182.545 | 196 | .931 | | |
| Total | 2237.250 | 200 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 198.839 | 199 | | | |

The findings indicated that there was a significant main effect of the advertised product type on the attitude towards green advertising, $F = 4,672$, $p = .032$. There was also significant main effect of celebrity type on the attitude towards green advertising, $F = 5,671$, $p = .018$. In addition, there was a significant interaction effect between celebrity and product type on the attitude towards green advertising $F = 7,152$, $p = .008$. This indicates that the effects of celebrity credibility and attractiveness were affected differently by product type.

The plot in Figure 1 is drawn for the ‘attitude toward ad’ variable, for two celebrities and two types of products. The interaction effect of these two factors is significant for ‘attitude toward ad’, because of intersection of two lines in the plot. As it is shown in the plot, the mean of ‘attitude toward ad’ is more in milk product with endorsement of Sener Sen, whereas this mean is more for the refrigerator product with Hulya Avsar’s endorsement.

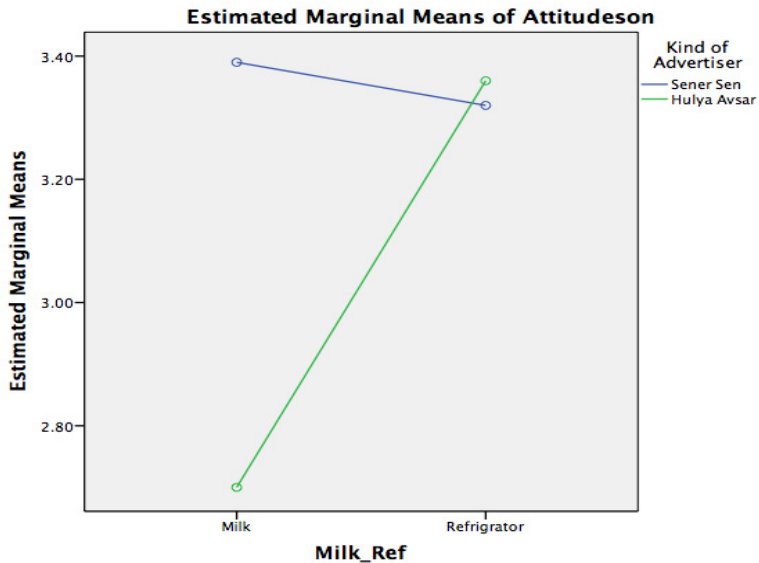


Fig. 1. Estimated Marginal Means of Attitude toward AD

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to understand the impact of credible v. attractive celebrities on green advertisement attitude for durable and non-durable product types. The results showed that credibility and attractiveness of a celebrity did matter for different types of products. Attitude toward green advertisement increased when the celebrity was Şener Şen (credible celebrity) for milk (non-durable product), and higher for Hülya Avşar (attractive celebrity) in refrigerator (durable product).

There might be several reasons for these results. First of all, refrigerator as a green product has designed to be more useful in reducing the energy and safe for environment, but it does not have a direct impact on people's health. Therefore, the involvement level of people might be lower, and attractiveness of the celebrity might work better than his/her credibility. Furthermore, attractiveness does not only refer to physical attractiveness. It refers to number of attributes like intellectual skills, personality properties, lifestyle or athletic power, which consumers consider in an endorser (Erdoğan, 1999). The respondents may have considered all the mentioned factors together, while selecting Hülya Avşar as the preferred endorser for refrigerator advertisement.

On the other hand, results remark that respondents had more positive attitude toward the milk (which is from food industry) with more trustworthy and expert endorser. Şener Şen also has more positive impact on enhancing respondents' attitude toward milk advertisement. These results can be explained by the notion that since milk has direct impact on respondents' health, they have more tendencies to seek more credible endorser (Şener Şen) in related advertisement.

The results of our study confirm that celebrity endorsement has an effect on green advertisement taking into consideration the impact of the product type. Further research might be done on the subject, covering other consumer response factors, such as recall, attitude towards the product or purchase intention. Another interesting factor might be involvement of the consumers with the product or the impact of product on human health versus general environment.

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