

Investigation of the Attitudes Towards Celebrities Endorsed Advertisements – Audience Groups Comparison

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ABSTRACT The use of celebrities for endorsement activities is a well established part of the marketing communication strategy. Yet, the communication “playground” is changing as we witness significant changes in the channels used for information transmission (as digital dominate the traditional) and in the audience (as generations change, growing up in a digital world). More, removing the communications’ constraints of space and time, the Internet led to the emergence of a new type of celebrity that seems to surpass the traditional ones. In this context, research in the celebrities’ endorsement area is still of significant relevance. Although many studies focused on investigating the effect of celebrity endorsement over consumer attitudes and behaviour, only few examined how audience factors influence these relationships. Hence, the main objective of this paper is to establish the variations in attitudes towards celebrities endorsed advertisements, considering the consumers’ age, gender, income and celebrity-product fit importance. The findings revealed significant differences in attitudes based on consumers’ age, income and product-celebrity fit importance, yet no distinctiveness in case of gender.

KEYWORDS:

Celebrity attributes; Celebrity endorsed advertisement; Attitude; Internet celebrity; Celebrity product fit

RECEIVED:

September 2019

JEL CLASSIFICATION:

M31, M37

ACCEPTED:

December 2019

1. Introduction

While hardly a new concept, the use of celebrity endorsers in marketing communications has increased over the past years (Fleck, Korchia and Le Roy, 2012), turning into a redoubtable influential tool (Leung, Cheng and Tse, 2018) used to easily reach the target customers and face the fierce competition overcrowding the markets. Since many companies allocate an important share of their marketing budget for this advertising technique (Lagner and Eisend, 2011) in order to gain competitive advantage, the percentage of advertisements worldwide featuring a celebrity got to an estimated 20-25% of ads, with variations across countries (Knoll and Matthes, 2017).

Celebrity endorsers represent individuals who use their pre-established public recognition on behalf of products by jointly featuring in advertisements (McCracken, 1989, p. 301). Because of fame, admiration or recognition, celebrities are able to catch and maintain the audiences’ attention, increasing the advertisement’s credibility and with it the brand awareness and recall (Erdogan, 1999; Leung, Cheng and Tse, 2018; Dhotre and Bhola, 2010). Hence, their image transfers to the product, brand or company, which can enhance the advertising effectiveness and boost the sales (Amos, Holmes and Stratton, 2008; Leung, Cheng and Tse, 2018).

Even though a wide range of studies investigated the effect of celebrity endorsement over consumer attitudes and behaviour (Knoll and Matthes, 2017), the research examining how target audience factors (as socio-demographics) influence these relationships is limited (Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016). Therefore, the present paper aims at reducing the knowledge gap, establishing whether

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audience's age, gender, income and importance given to product-celebrity fit influence the attitude towards celebrities endorsed advertisements.

2. Theoretical framework

The number of studies, synthesis and meta-analysis in the celebrities endorsement field increased after 1990 (Amos, Holmes and Strutton, 2008; Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999; Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016; Knoll and Matthes, 2017). Out of these, a plethora of research focused on the characteristics endorses should possess in order to influence the audience and lead to changes in attitudes or purchase intention (the so called "source effect"), yet with relatively little progress over the years (Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016). The attributes used to measure celebrities' endorsement effectiveness and validated in different research contexts are: source credibility, expertise, attractiveness, likeability, similarity (celebrity-audience congruency), familiarity, celebrity-product fit, etc. (Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999; Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016; Knoll and Matthes, 2017; Samarasinghe, 2018; Leung, Cheng and Tse, 2018). The present study was designed to consider the major attributes: source credibility, source attractiveness, celebrity-product fit and the status of digital versus traditional celebrity.

Celebrity endorsement research has often revolved around two models: The Source Credibility Model and the Source Attractiveness model (Ohanian, 1990).

Source credibility plays an important part when choosing the ads' spokesperson (Wongweeranonchai and McClelland, 2016) due to its impact on the audience. Specifically, when information is communicated by a credible endorser, the audience can accept "a source influence in terms of their personal attitudes and value structures", which eventually might reflect on their "beliefs, opinions, attitudes and/or behavior" (Erdogan, 1999, p. 297). The original Source Credibility Model consists of two components, namely the source trustworthiness and source expertise (Wongweeranonchai and McClelland, 2016). Source trustworthiness assesses to which degree a celebrity endorser is perceived by the audience as being dependable, honest, reliable, sincere, trustworthy and able to offer information that is not biased (Erdogan, Baker, and Tagg, 2001; Ohanian, 1990; Pornpitakpan, 2003). Thus, through trust transfer, the celebrity endorser can decrease the audience's doubts towards the product/brand and the perceived risks. Previous research confirmed the existence of a positive relationship between the perceived celebrity trustworthiness and purchase intention, respectively brand evaluation (Ohanian, 1990; Pornpitakpan, 2004; Khan, 2018; Samarasinghe, 2018; Hani, Marwan and Andre, 2018; Ibidunni et al., 2018; Amos, Holmes and Strutton, 2008). Source expertise is defined "as the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertion" (Erdogan, 1999, p. 298), or in other words, to what extent the audience perceives the celebrity endorser as having appropriate skills, knowledge and experience (Ohanian, 1990). Thereby, an endorser perceived as expert can influence the audience's perception on the product/brand's quality (Erdogan, 1999). Previous studies underlined that when an endorser is perceived as an expert, he/she becomes a more persuasive source of information (Erdogan, 1999), increasing the effectiveness in spreading the message (Wongweeranonchai and McClelland, 2016) and encouraging the purchase intentions (Khan, 2018; Samarasinghe, 2018; Hani, Marwan and Andre, 2018). In other words, is increasing the endorsement effectiveness (Amos, Holmes and Strutton, 2008).

Source Attractiveness Model measures more than endorser's physical attractiveness or appearance, extending to cover aspects as likeability, personality and familiarity (Leung, Cheng and Tse, 2018; Amos, Holmes and Strutton, 2008). Existing studies showed that endorser's perceived attractiveness has a positive impact on the message's effectiveness (Till and Busler, 2000), increasing the brand recall, the attitude towards the brand and purchase intention (Kahle and Homer, 1985; Pornpitakpan, 2004; Wongweeranonchai and McClelland, 2016; Leung, Cheng and Tse, 2018; Erdogan, 1999; Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016; Khan, 2018; Samarasinghe, 2018).

The attractiveness and credibility of an endorsing celebrity need to be accompanied by a congruency between that spokesperson and the product /brand (Leung, Cheng and Tse, 2018). The congruence or "fit" (or "match-up" hypothesis) reflects the degree of match between celebrity's characteristics and product's or brand's attributes, relationships that have been investigated in several studies (Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016; Fleck, Korchia and Le Roy, 2012; Kahle and Homer, 1985; Misra and Beatty, 1990; McCormick, 2016; Till and Busler, 2000). Results show that a better perceived

similarity between the celebrity and the product/brand facilitates the transfer of affect which leads to a higher recall of brand's information (Misra and Beatty, 1990), better brand evaluation and increased purchase intention (Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016; Seiler and Kucza, 2017; Gaied and Rached, 2017; Choi and Rifon, 2012; McCormick, 2016) and thus enhances the effect of the advertisement (Leung, Cheng and Tse, 2018; Erdogan, 1999; Amos, Holmes and Strutton, 2008).

If offline mass-media, and more specifically television, led to the appearance of traditional celebrities (Giles, 2018) by increasing their public recognition, in a similar way, the Internet led to the emergence of the so called Internet or digital celebrities. Hence, traditional celebrities are represented by actors, athletes, musicians, models, Tv stars, comedians, writers, etc. (Osei-Frimpong, Donkor and Owusu-Frimpong, 2019; Knoll and Matthes, 2017), while Internet celebrities are online opinion leaders who have gained fame on the Internet and are able to influence others through Social Media platforms - vloggers, bloggers and Instafamous personalities (Li, 2018). Lately, companies have begun to increasingly use Internet celebrities or micro-celebrities to endorse their products in addition or instead of traditional celebrities (Marvick, 2015, De Veirman et al, 2017; Hwang and Zhang, 2018; Gräve, 2017) for several reasons. Firstly, due to Internet's features, digital celebrities are able to attract, engage, maintain a large number (even millions) of followers and fans on social networking platforms and expose them almost instantly to messages, product reviews, recommendations and personal experiences. Secondly, people find Internet celebrities more credible (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017), accessible (de Veirman, Csuberghe, and Hudders, 2017), trustworthy, more familiar and similar to them than traditional celebrities, which makes them better product endorsers (Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget, 2019; Gräve, 2017; Rasmunssen, 2018; Jin, Muqaddam, and Ryu, 2019). Another aspect is that Internet celebrities turned into a cultural phenomenon for younger generations (Juntiwarakij, 2018), often eclipsing the traditional celebrities (Giles, 2018). In addition, the parasocial interactions shifted from a one-sided relationship to a two-sided one, because digital celebrities interact with the followers/fans, providing access to more private parts of their life but also accepting suggestions and/or feedback (Djafarova and Trofimenko, 2019; Hou, 2019). As a consequence, the followers/fans give more importance to the parasocial interaction and their attachment, than to source credibility (Sokolova and Kefi, 2019). This closer parasocial interaction can make followers/fans regard digital celebrities as "real friends" that send authentic and trustworthy messages (Hwang and Zhang, 2018; Uzunoglu and Kip, 2014; Rasmunssen, 2018). More, if followers/fans perceive Internet celebrities as having opinion leadership, the intentions to interact with and to recommend their account increase (Casalo, Flavian and Ibanez-Sanchez, 2018). This can be accompanied by a desire to imitate the celebrities by purchasing and using the products they endorse (Ki and Kim, 2019).

3. Methodology

The research method was a personal structured quantitative survey with a questionnaire as a data-gathering instrument. The statistical universe was embodied by the people from Romania (Transylvania region), the research sample consisting of 301 individuals. The survey questionnaire assessed the perceived attitude towards celebrities endorsed advertisements considering celebrities' attributes, celebrities' endorsement type, and use of Internet celebrities.

To capture the celebrities' attributes, were taken into consideration three dimensions widely used in the literature to characterize the celebrity spokespeople (see Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016) and combined by Ohanian (1990) in an integrated Source Credibility Model: "expertise", "trustworthiness" and "attractiveness". According to source-credibility theory, it is assumed that these aspects can have an impact upon brands' evaluation (Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016), enhancing the persuasiveness of an advertising message (Ohanian, 1990).

For celebrities' endorsement type measurement, was taken into account the classification proposed by McCracken (1989), which is often mentioned in literature yet less investigated in research: "I endorse this product" – the explicit mode in which the endorsers underpin the collaboration with the product/brand, "I use this product" – the implicit mode specific to endorsers mentioning that he/she is an actual user of the product/brand, "You should use this product" – the imperative mode, case in which the endorsers encourages the audience to use the product/brand, and "the non-verbal

message” –the co-presented mode where the endorser just appears with the product/brand in an advertisement.

Since Internet celebrities share personal information and interact online, their fans/followers feel they have a closer friendship (Hwang and Zhang, 2018); this makes the parasocial interaction between audience and Internet celebrities more complex, as compared to traditional celebrities. In this context, a scale to evaluate the attitudes towards ads with Internet celebrities was developed to include the following assumptions: Internet celebrities are more credible/trustworthy than traditional celebrities (Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget, 2019), Internet celebrities are better opinion leaders than traditional celebrities (Hwang and Zhang, 2018; Rorholm, 2018; Chang and Woo, 2020), Internet celebrities have a stronger influence on their fans/followers compared to traditional celebrities (Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget, 2019; Rorholm, 2018; Liu et al., 2017 cited in Hwang and Zhang, 2018), Internet celebrities are a real cultural phenomenon for young generation (Juntiwarakij, 2018).

Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Data analysis was conducted using the IBM SPSS software.

4. Research findings

Results presented in Table 1 reveal that gender distribution is heavily dominated by the women group, as its weight is 71.10%, in comparison with men group who represent 28.90%.

In case of age, the sample was separated in two groups based on their technology skills (usage of smartphone, PC, Internet), because this aspect can have a significant influence on the answers related to attitudes towards ads with Internet celebrities. Thus, in term of age groups, the respondents aged between 18-40 comprise almost half of the sample (50.83%), while those over 40 years represent the other half (49.17%). The under 40 years old group includes two generations with advanced technological skills namely millennials and Z generation, while the over 40 years group includes X generation and Baby Boomers which have more limited technological abilities (the analysis took into consideration Romania’s socio-economic context of post-communist developing country - www.independent.co.uk; www.wall-street.ro; www.revistabiz.ro).

Monthly income distribution pinpoints that a large share (37.21%) of respondents fell into a lower than 2000 lei (420 €) income range, specific mostly to younger individuals (18-25 years) as unemployed students that receive allowance from their family, students with part-time jobs, young adults with entry level jobs. Another 37.21% of respondents have a monthly income of 2000-5000 lei (420 – 1050 €) particular to individuals with low work experience and less paid jobs, while 25.58% of respondents earn more than 5000 lei (1050 €) per month; both categories, include mostly individuals aged 25 years and older.

Table 1. Sample’s profile

		N	(%)
Gender	Female	214	71.10
	Male	87	28.90
Age	18- 40 years	153	50.83
	> 40 years	148	49.17
Income	≤ 2000 lei	112	37.21
	2000-5000 lei	112	37.21
	> 5000 lei	77	25.58

* Notes: 1 leu = 0,21 Euro Country’s minimum gross income = 2080 lei Average gross income= 5.127 lei

Table 2 provides the distribution of the attitudes towards celebrities endorsed ads, considering the celebrities’ attributes. Results show that most respondents have a positive attitude towards ads that use attractive (54.4%), expert (67.4%) or trustworthy (69.4%) celebrities for endorsement. Lower percentages indicate a neutral opinion and even fewer disagree with the statement (15.9%, 9.3%,

9.2%). There is a level of high similarity between attitudes towards ads with expert and trustworthy celebrities, including the average.

Cronbach's alpha used to measure of internal consistency of the scale indicated a value of 0.800 with a low “inter-item” correlation, therefore, the first item (“I have a positive attitude towards ads with visually appealing celebrities”) was eliminated, improving the *Cronbach's alpha* to 0.813 (acceptable threshold - Hair et al., 2009). In the remained format, the scale is actually the basic “source-credibility model” that included only celebrities’ expertise and trustworthiness (Erdogan, 1999). For further use, the factor is named “attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with credible endorser”.

Table 2. Distribution of the attitudes towards celebrities endorsed ads, considering the celebrities’ attributes

Attitude towards ads, considering the celebrities’ attributes	Strongly disagree(%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Avg.	Std Dev
I have a positive attitude towards ads with visually appealing celebrities.	5.3	10.6	29.6	45.8	8.6	3.42	.975
I have a positive attitude towards ads with celebrities whom are expert in the field presented in the advertising.	3.0	6.3	23.3	48.8	18.6	3.74	.935
I have a positive attitude towards ads with celebrities whom I trust to present true information.	2.7	7.0	20.9	52.5	16.9	3.74	.912

* Cronbach’s alpha = 0.813 (first item eliminated)

As Table 3 illustrates, the way celebrities communicate to express the product endorsement doesn’t have a clear effect on attitudes towards advertisement, as the percentages are almost equally distributed between respondents who accept, have a neutral position or disagree with the statement. One exception is the case of the imperative mode, where a higher number of respondents (47.5%) indicated that won’t have a positive attitude towards ads in which celebrities say “You should use this product”, thus the factor was eliminated from the scale.

With a value of 0.819, *Cronbach's alpha* is indicating a good internal consistency, while all inter-item and item-total correlations reach to acceptable values (Hair et al., 2009). For further analysis, the factor is named “attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with appealing endorsement mode”.

Table 3. Distribution of the attitudes towards celebrities endorsed ads, considering the type of endorsement

Attitude towards ads, considering the type of celebrities’ endorsement	Strongly disagree(%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Avg.	Std Dev
I have a positive attitude towards ads where celebrities say “I endorse this product”.	9.3	26.9	33.6	25.9	4.3	2.89	1.032
I have a positive attitude towards ads where celebrities say “I use this product”.	9.6	26.6	27.6	31.2	5.0	2.95	1.079
I have a positive attitude towards ads where celebrities say “You should use this product”	12.6	34.9	32.6	17.6	2.3	2.62	.991
I have a positive attitude towards ads where celebrities just appear with a product.	9.0	25.2	34.6	27.6	3.7	2.92	1.015

* Cronbach’s alpha = 0.819 (third item eliminated)

The results in Table 4, show that most respondents have positive attitudes towards ads that use Internet celebrities for endorsement, considering them “superior” to traditional celebrities: a cultural phenomenon (67.4%), better opinion leaders (56.5%), stronger influence on fans/followers (74.1%) An exception is related to celebrities’ credibility, as the respondents’ opinions are equally distributed between all possibilities.

Cronbach’s alpha (0.764), inter-item and item-total correlations exceed the requested thresholds, indicating a good internal consistency for the scale (Hair et al., 2009). For further use, the factor is named “attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with Internet celebrities”.

Table 4. Distribution of the attitudes towards celebrities endorsed ads, considering the use of Internet celebrities

Attitude towards ads, considering the use of Internet (vs traditional) celebrities	Strongly disagree(%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Avg.	Std Dev
I have a positive attitude towards ads with Internet celebrities, because they are more credible/trustworthy than traditional celebrities.	6.6	26.6	30.6	29.6	6.6	3.03	1.047
I have a positive attitude towards ads with Internet celebrities because they are a real cultural phenomenon for young generation.	4.3	11.3	16.9	50.8	16.6	3.64	1.025
I have a positive attitude towards ads with Internet celebrities because I believe they are better opinion leaders (in online communities) than traditional celebrities.	3.7	11.6	28.2	43.2	13.3	3.51	.985
I have a positive attitude towards ads with Internet celebrities because they have a stronger influence on followers/fans compared to traditional celebrities.	2.0	6.6	17.3	58.8	15.3	3.79	.853

* Cronbach’s alpha = 0.764

Considering the previous results, can be stated that all proposed factors qualified for the group difference analysis. The potential variations will be examined by age, gender, income and product-celebrity fit importance.

The variation in attitudes towards celebrities endorsed ads based on respondents’ age, have been evaluated with *Independent Sample T-Test*. Results presented in Table 5, show that age leads to statistical significant differences in respondents attitudes towards celebrities endorsed ads, for all three factors - credible endorser, appealing endorsement mode, Internet celebrities ($p < 0.05$ acceptable threshold - Hair et al., 2009). Thus, compared to individuals over 40, those aged between 18-40 years have more favorable attitudes towards ads with celebrities that those including a credible endorser or an Internet celebrity. On the other hand, people over 40 years have more favorable attitudes towards ads with an appealing endorsement mode, than younger respondents.

Same test has been used to understand the variation in attitudes towards celebrities endorsed ads based on respondents’ gender (Table 6). As all p values exceed the acceptable threshold ($p > 0.05$, Hair et al., 2009), can be stated that there is no statistically significant difference between the gender groups. Therefore, women and men share similar attitudes towards celebrities endorsed ads for all the factors - credible endorser, appealing endorsement mode, Internet celebrities.

Table 5. Distribution of the attitudes towards celebrities endorsed ads – age comparison

	Age group	N	Average	Std. dev	t	p
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with credible endorser.	18 - 40 years	153	3.8627	0.767	2.587	0.010*
	> 40 years	148	3.6115	0.908		
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with appealing endorsement mode.	18 - 40 years	153	2.7625	0.837	-3.163	0.002*
	> 40 years	148	3.0833	0.921		
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with Internet celebrities.	18 - 40 years	153	3.6569	0.711	3.977	0.000*
	> 40 years	148	3.3209	0.753		

* Difference is significant

Table 6. Distribution of the attitudes towards celebrities endorsed ads – gender comparison

	Gender	N	Average	Std. dev	t	p
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with credible endorser.	Female	214	3.7593	0.801	0.600	0.550
	Male	87	3.6897	0.956		
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with appealing endorsement mode.	Female	214	2.9704	0.909	1.531	0.127
	Male	87	2.7969	0.841		
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with Internet celebrities.	Female	214	3.5035	0.751	0.428	0.669
	Male	87	3.4626	0.750		

The variations in attitudes towards celebrities endorsed ads based on respondents' income have been tested using the *One-Way Anova* technique (Table 7). Results indicate a statistical significant differences between the income groups, for attitudes towards ads with credible endorsers and ads with Internet celebrities ($p < 0.05$, acceptable Hair et al., 2009). For attitudes towards ads with appealing endorsement mode, the differences between the groups are not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

Table 7. Distribution of the attitudes towards celebrities endorsed ads – income comparison

	Income	N	Average	Std. dev	ANOVA	F	p
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with credible endorser.	≤ 2000 lei	112	3.9241	0.754	Between groups Within groups	4,738	0.009*
	2000-5000 lei	112	3.5848	0.897			
	> 5000 lei	77	3.6948	0.862			
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with appealing endorsement mode.	≤ 2000 lei	112	2.8333	0.760	Between groups Within groups	1.001	0.370
	2000-5000 lei	112	2.9494	0.939			
	> 5000 lei	77	3.0043	0.996			
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with Internet celebrities.	≤ 2000 lei	112	3.6897	0.881	Between groups Within groups	6,435	0.002*
	2000-5000 lei	112	3.3750	0.606			
	> 5000 lei	77	3.3734	0.816			

* Difference is significant

As *Levene's statistic* test revealed a significance level of 0.011 (lower than recommended threshold of 0.05, Field, 2009) for "Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with Internet celebrities", analysis switched to *Welch's test*, which leads to a significance value of 0.001 ($p < 0.05$), confirming a statistically significant difference between the means. For "Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with appealing endorsement mode", the significance value returned by *Levene's statistic* test was 0.0054, while the one of *Welch's test* was 0.370, indicating that there is no statistically significant differences between the groups.

For the cases with statistical significant differences, analysis continued with multiple comparisons, using the *Games-Howell Post-Hoc test* for "Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with Internet celebrities" and *Hochberg test* for "Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with credible endorser" (Table 8).

According to the results, income leads to statistically significant differences in attitudes towards ads with credible endorsers, but only when comparing individuals with an income lower than 2000 lei to individuals with an income ranging between 2000-5000 lei ($p < 0.05$, acceptable Field, 2009). So, the respondents that reported the lowest income (< 2000 lei) are more likely to have a more favorable attitude towards ads with credible endorsers than those with an income of 2000-5000 lei. There is no significant difference between the highest income (> 5000 lei) respondents and their counterparts with an income lower than 2000 lei or between 2000-5000 lei ($p > 0.05$).

Same time, income leads to statistically significant differences in attitudes towards ads with Internet celebrities, when comparing individuals with the lowest income (< 2000 lei) to individuals with an income ranging between 2000-5000 lei or greater than 5000 lei ($p < 0.05$, acceptable Field, 2009). So, the respondents with the lowest income (≤ 2000 lei) have a more favorable attitude towards ads with Internet celebrities than people with higher income. There is no significant difference between respondents with an income between 2000-5000 lei and those with income greater than 5000 lei ($p > 0.05$).

Table 8. Distribution of the attitudes towards celebrities endorsed ads – Multiple comparisons (Income)

Games-Howell /HochbergTest	Income I	Income II	Mean difference	p
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with credible endorser.	≤ 2000 lei (1)	2000-5000 lei (2)	0.3392	0.008*
		> 5000 lei (3)	0.2293	0.183
	2000-5000 lei (2)	≤ 2000 lei (1)	-0.3392	0.008*
		> 5000 lei (3)	-0.1099	0.756
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with Internet celebrities.	≤ 2000 lei (1)	≤ 2000 lei (1)	-0.2293	0.183
		2000-5000 lei (2)	0.1099	0.756
	2000-5000 lei (2)	> 5000 lei (3)	0.3147	0.004*
		≤ 2000 lei (1)	0.3163	0.010*
	≤ 2000 lei (1)	> 5000 lei (3)	-0.3147	0.004*
	2000-5000 lei (2)	≤ 2000 lei (1)	0.0016	1.000
		> 5000 lei (3)	-0.3163	0.010*
	> 5000 lei (3)	≤ 2000 lei (1)	-0.0016	1.000
	2000-5000 lei (2)	-0.0016	1.000	

* Difference is significant

One-Way Anova technique has been also used to test the variances in attitudes towards celebrities endorsed ads based on the importance given by respondents to the product-celebrity fit (Table 9). There are statistically significant differences for all three cases of measured attitudes, as $p < 0.05$ (Hair et al., 2009).

Table 9. Distribution of the attitudes towards celebrities endorsed ads – celebrity-product fit importance comparison

	Fit importance	N	Average	Std. dev	ANOVA	F	p
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with credible endorser.	Low	36	2.6944	1.178	Between groups	57,83	0.000*
	Medium	84	3.5238	0.634			
	High	181	4.0470	0.638	Within groups		
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with appealing endorsement mode.	Low	36	2.1574	0.941	Between groups	38,79	0.000*
	Medium	84	2.5675	0.682			
	High	181	3.2357	0.817	Within groups		
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with Internet celebrities.	Low	36	2.9792	0.968	Between groups	22,28	0.000*
	Medium	84	3.2589	0.649			
	High	181	3.7017	0.663	Within groups		

*Difference is significant

Fit importance between the celebrity and the product endorsed

Levene's statistic test indicated significance values lower than the recommended threshold of 0.05 ($p = 0.000$, $p = 0.013$) for “Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with credible endorser” and “Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with Internet celebrities”, so the analysis switched to Welch's test, which provided in both cases an acceptable significance value of 0.000 (<0.05 acceptable Field, 2009), thus confirming a statistically significant difference between the means.

Analysis continued with multiple comparisons, for all three factors, using the nonparametric *Games-Howell Post-Hoc test* for “Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with credible endorser” and “Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with Internet celebrities”, respectively the *Hochberg test* for “Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with appealing endorsement mode” (Table 10).

Results show that in case of attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with credible endorser or with appealing endorsement mode, all importance-fit groups are statistically different ($p < 0.05$, acceptable Field, 2009). In the case of ads with Internet celebrities, there are statistically significant differences when comparing the group with fit high importance to the low or medium importance groups ($p < 0.05$), and no statistically differences when making comparisons between the groups with low and medium importance ($p > 0.05$).

Table 10. Distribution of the attitudes towards celebrities endorsed ads – Multiple comparisons (Celebrity-product fit importance)

Games-Howell /HochbergTest	Fit I importance	Fit II importance	Mean difference	p
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with credible endorser.	Low (1)	Medium (2)	-0.8293	0.002*
		High (3)	-1.3525	0.000*
	Medium (2)	Low (1)	0.8293	0.001*
		High (3)	-0.5231	0.000*
	High (3)	Low (1)	1.3525	0.000*
		Medium (2)	0.5231	0.000*
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with appealing endorsement mode.	Low (1)	Medium (2)	-0.4100	0.031*
		High (3)	-1.0783	0.000*
	Medium (2)	Low (1)	0.4100	0.031*
		High (3)	-0.6682	0.000*
	High (3)	Low (1)	1.0783	0.000*
		Medium (2)	0.6682	0.000*
Attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with Internet celebrities.	Low (1)	Medium (2)	-0.2797	0.261
		High (3)	-0.7224	0.000*
	Medium (2)	Low (1)	0.2797	0.261
		High (3)	-0.4427	0.000*
	High (3)	Low (1)	0.7224	0.000*
		Medium (2)	0.4427	0.000*

* Difference is significant

5. Discussion and conclusions

Results of the study showed statistical significant differences in the attitudes towards celebrities endorsed advertisements based on consumers' age, income and product-celebrity fit importance. Nonetheless, the differences are less significant for some of the groups.

In respect to respondent's age, the results showed that individuals between 18-40 years have a more favorable attitude towards ads that include a credible endorser or an Internet celebrity, while the ones in the group over 40 years have a more favorable attitude towards ads with appealing endorsement mode. Hence, older respondents pay more attention to the message, while the younger ones pay attention to the person transmitting the message, a result partially consistent with other studies. Cole et al. (2008, cited in Keel and Natarajan, 2012) suggest that the discrepancy between young and older adults' perception may start at neurological level, as they use different areas of the brain for various tasks; this makes younger adults give more importance to “people” than to brands in

the encoding processes associated to tasks as the evaluation of ads' messages. From the psychological perspective, young adults are more susceptible to becoming attached to celebrities than older individuals, because during early adulthood they enter a critical phase of personal identity and self-concept development, in which a key role is played by parasocial relationships (see Ilicic et al., 2016). During that period, celebrities turn into role models that shape the young individuals' behaviors, attitudes and values, yet simultaneously influence their attitudes towards endorsed ads, brands/products and purchase intentions (Bush, Martin and Bush, 2004; Ilicic, Baxter and Kulczynski, 2016). As the individuals age increases, the celebrity endorsement effect will drop (Knoll and Matthes, 2017). Other studies conducted among younger segments of respondents (18-27 years, 18-30 years, 18-40 years) confirmed an engagement in parasocial interactions with Internet celebrities, which were perceived as being more knowledgeable, credible and more similar to them than traditional celebrities; more, these features positively reflected in the effects of endorsement over the purchase behaviour (Hwang and Zhang, 2018; Rasmussen, 2018; Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). Nonetheless, since Biswas, Hussain and O'Donnell (2009) age groups comparison showed differences in purchase intention between individuals aged 18-25 years and those aged 25-40 years, future research should consider dividing the age groups in more than two segments.

In case of income, the results indicated a significant difference for attitudes towards ads with credible endorsers and ads with Internet celebrities. The variation in attitude towards ads with credible endorsers is only met between individuals with the lowest income (<2000 lei) and the highest income (>5000 lei). While, for ads endorsed by Internet celebrities the attitudes are different when comparing individuals with the lowest income to the other two groups. Although the results may seem random, the explanation is actually given by the age-income relationship. An in depth analysis, revealed that the lowest income group is mostly formed by the youngest respondents, aged between 18-25 years old (the Z generation), while the other two income groups include mostly individuals aged 25 years and older. Hence, in this specific case, most of the aspects that justify the results from age are also representative for income. Nonetheless, it can be emphasized that previous studies showed differences in celebrity endorsement effect based on audiences' income. Indah et al. (2019) have found that income moderates the effect of endorsement celebrity credibility on purchase intention. Gauns et al., (2017) established that individuals with low income are more likely to fall under the effect of celebrity endorsement, than their counterparts with medium or high income. In a similar manner, Isaksen and Roper (2008) showed that low-income teenagers are more susceptible to be influenced by celebrities than the ones with a higher income. Yet, Premeaux (2009) found a discrepancy when considering both income (to establish the class) and gender. Results show that men in the upper class were influenced by celebrity endorsement to a greater degree than men in the middle class. For women, the situation is mixed, as in one case the influence was higher for those in middle class, while the opposite happened for the second case.

Further analysis indicate significant differences between all groups of product-celebrity fit importance, in case of attitude towards celebrities endorsed ads with credible endorser or with appealing endorsement mode. Therefore, individuals which consider more important the product-celebrity fit have more favorable attitudes towards ads with credible endorsers and ads with appealing endorsement mode. The less importance respondents give to the product-celebrity fit, the less favorable becomes their attitude towards ads with credible endorsers and ads with appealing endorsement mode. For ads with Internet celebrities, statistical differences were obtained when comparing the group with high importance given to fit to the low or medium importance groups. So, the persons giving a high importance to product-celebrity fit have more favorable attitudes towards ads with Internet celebrities than individuals who give a lower importance. Previous studies confirmed a positive relationship between product/brand – celebrity fit and endorsements' effectiveness, in the sense that a better fit leads to more positive brand evaluations, attitudes and purchase intention (Choi and Rifon, 2012; Seiler and Kucza, 2017; Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016; Gaied and Rached, 2017; Erdogan, 1999; Knoll and Matthes, 2017; Till and Bustler, 2000; Fleck, Korchia and Le Roy, 2012; McCormick, 2016; Misra and Beatty, 1990). Reversed, if there is a mismatch between the celebrity and the product/brand's attributes, than the endorser is perceived as being less credible and the endorsements' effectiveness drops (Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget, 2019; Knoll and Matthes, 2017).

On the other hand gender doesn't play an important role in the attitudes perception, both men and women sharing similar opinions for ads with credible endorsers, appealing endorsement mode and Internet celebrities. Yet, in this instance, should be underlined that the groups were unbalanced based on size, with a number of women double than men. Nonetheless, the results are not surprising since previous studies, revealed contradictory results in responses to celebrity endorsement. Authors like Ohanian (1990) and Tzoumaka, Tsiotsou and Siomkos (2014) found no significant effect of gender on perceptions of celebrity's attributes (trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness), nor on purchase intention. Conversely, Saramasinghe (2018) revealed that audience's gender moderated the relationship between perception of celebrity's factors (expertise, trustworthiness, similarity and likeability) and purchase intention. In addition, Liu and Brock (2011) established that male respondents are more responsive to female celebrity attractiveness than women, arguing that men are more visually driven when seeing an ad while women have a more sophisticated thinking and take into account other factors besides attractiveness. Another study conducted by Premeaux (2009), showed that both women and men were influenced by celebrity endorsement in the sense of attracted attention and generated interest. Yet, men in the middle class were influenced to a greater degree than women, while for the upper class the situation reversed.

Since the studies investigating how target audience factors influence the effect of celebrity endorsement over consumer attitudes and behaviour is limited (Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016), and the ones making audience groups comparison even scarce, the present manuscript should be considered exploratory, opening the path for investigations to come. Future research is needed to consider the extended scales of source attractiveness and credibility. Furthermore, researchers should examine the audience's cultural specificity, in cross-cultural comparisons.

From the managerial perspective, findings from the current investigation provide communication strategic insights into celebrity endorsement selection and audience targeting decisions. As an example, a company can choose Internet celebrities to reach to a younger audience and traditional celebrities for older audience.

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Please cite the article as it follows

Băcilă, M.F., Ciornea, R., Drule, A.M. and Cohut, A.M. (2019). Investigation of the Attitudes Towards Celebrities Endorsed Advertisements – Audience Groups Comparison, *Marketing from Information to Decision Journal*, Volume 2, Issue 2, pp. 5 -17.