

Research on Whether or Not the Opposite-Sex Endorsement of Intimate Products Affects the Advertising Effectiveness

Yu-Chung Hsiao and Xin-Ling Li

Abstract—With the development of the times, the advertising industry has developed at a rapid speed and consumers receive thousands of advertisements every day. The term advertising endorser is gradually becoming more and more familiar to the general public. In order to make themselves stand out in the thousands of advertisements, many advertising companies began to seek new advertising methods. Hiring an opposite-sex endorser is one of them. Since Kimura Takuya endorsed a lipstick brand in 1995, there has been quite a number of cases of opposite-sex endorsement that grew at a slow and steady rate. In 2013, Wang Dongchen, a former member of the Taiwanese boy group Fahrenheit, endorsed a sanitary napkin brand, which cause such a sensation and opened a new chapter in the domestic opposite-sex endorser's endorsement of intimate products. The results of this study showed that gender conflict between endorser and product did not affect the effectiveness of advertising, but consumers of different genders presented different attitudes towards endorsers of conflicting genders.

Index Terms—Opposite-sex endorsement, intimac, gender conflict, advertising effectiveness.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the 21st century, the world has gradually entered the era of brand economic consumption and customers paid more and more attention to the brand when purchasing products. The China Daily mentioned that the commodity society has experienced product competition and has entered the era of brand consumption to develop into what it is today. Brand scholars [1] pointed out that marketing in the 21st century is the competition of brands. As of today's era, the brand has become one of the most precious assets of a company.

In order to increase brand value, consumer companies are gradually seeking to differentiate their brands. The brand endorser has become the main method and approach for companies to differentiate and create images for themselves. A research on 5,000 TV commercials showed that celebrities are significantly more convincing when recommending a product and presenting its features. In 2010, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences conducted measurements and statistics on TV commercials broadcast nationwide and found that more than one-third of commercial advertisements used endorsers.

However, with the development of economy and society,

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companies gradually seek to differentiate their brands, and they are no longer satisfied with finding endorsers who have the same gender as the product users. Moreover, in recent years, the boundaries between men and women for product consumption have become increasingly blurred. The cosmetics that people have always defined as women's products are gradually becoming popular with male customers, and cologne, men's wear, etc., which are always considered as men's product, have also gradually acquired male consumers. In European and American countries, the market share of men's skin care products is increasing at an annual rate of 25%, and the market share of men's products has accounted for more than 30% of the cosmetics market. The sales of men's cosmetics have reached 5.337 billion US dollars in recent years.

In recent years, there have been women's products using male celebrity endorsers and men's products using female celebrity endorsers. Consumers have had mixed and controversial reviews about this phenomenon. The author has been paying attention to the phenomenon of opposite-sex endorsement for a long time. Therefore, the author wants to carry out a survey about opposite-sex endorsers.

The author would like to use this research to understand the development of opposite-sex endorsers, and to understand whether using the opposite-sex endorsement of an intimate product would affect consumers' purchase desire, as well as whether the gender conflict between the endorser and advertising audience would influence the advertisement or not. If there is an impact, is it positive or negative? Based on the results of the comprehensive research, conclusions are obtained about whether the product should choose the opposite-sex endorser to endorse the intimate product, or what kind of product should use the opposite-sex endorser, and what product should not. The influence of the relationship between men and women on purchasing activities is also analyzed.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Endorser

According to Mowen [2], the definition of endorser advertisement is: Establish or rebuild the consumers' attitude towards the product by the endorser's approval or endowing cultural connotation in the advertisement.

McCracken [3] defined the endorser advertisement as follows: The advertising endorsers use their popularity and present the user benefits through an advertisement. When the

consumers process the information in the advertisement, they project their impression of the endorser onto the image of the product. The advertising endorsers recommend the endorsement product through the consumers' trust or affection for them.

Companies often believe that hiring a persuasive endorser for consumers to endorse the product will have a transference effect on consumers, that is, the consumers will transfer their preference for the endorsers to the product. Therefore, we can often see stars or celebrities as endorsers for a product or event, not only to attract the attention of the media and consumers but also to use the popularity of the endorsers to add points to the product.

B. Opposite-Sex Endorser

According to the research results of Kanungo and Pang [4], for products like cars that have a masculine image, using male endorsers would obtain a better advertising effectiveness; while for products like a sofa that is regarded to have a feminine image, using female endorsers would generate better advertising effectiveness. In addition, for products like stereo which has a gender-neutral image, using either female endorser or both male and female endorsers together would have a better advertising effectiveness. Moreover, if the endorser's gender is consistent with the product's gender, the consumer would perceive a better product quality.

Caballero and Solomon [4] considered the gender compliance between product users and product endorsers. To examine the advertising effectiveness of the endorser's gender and attractiveness, they selected two types of products, namely beer and facial tissue, and two types of endorsers, namely male/female models. Combinations without models were also designed as the experimental control groups. The research results found that the pair of beer and male model had a larger sales volume compared to the pairs of beer and female model or no model.

However, Debevec and Iyer [5] argued that when the product gender and endorser's gender were inconsistent, the advertising effectiveness would be better. When testing the effects of gender incompliance between endorser and product, they found that the endorser's gender had a considerable influence on the positioning of their endorsement products. The study selected three types of products: dishwashing liquid (feminine), beer (masculine), and toothpaste (gender neutral). The products were paired with two types of endorsers, namely male and female endorsers. As men are the main consumer group of beer products, beer was used as the representative product with a masculine image. Similarly, since the main consumer group of dishwashing liquid is female, it is defined as a product with a feminine image. The survey results found that consumers would have a more masculine feeling when the dishwashing liquid was endorsed by males, and a more feminine feeling when the beer was endorsed by females. The investigators believed that due to the generation of different feelings, consumers were more likely to pay more attention to the details of the advertisement, thereby generating a better advertising effectiveness.

Whipple and A. E. Courtney [6] also believed that opposite-sex endorser endorsement would generate better advertising effectiveness. As pointed about by the study of

Whipple and McManamon [7], for products with a feminine image, the endorser's gender would affect the advertising effectiveness significantly. While for products with a masculine image, the endorser's gender did not have a significant influence. For the gender-neutral products, there was no significant difference in the effects when using male or female endorsers.

In summary, it can be seen from the above studies that scholars have different opinions about the advertising effects of paring up endorsers and products of different genders. The products studied by scholars were mainly non-intimate products (such as beer, dishwashing liquid, etc.). The study of opposite-sex endorsement for intimate products has not been found yet.

III. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Whether an advertisement is successful or not is closely related to whether consumers agree or not, as well as whether it is closely related to consumers' wishes and preferences or not. In recent years, women's products, such as lipsticks and sanitary napkins, are no longer using female endorsers exclusively. In the male product advertisements such as razors and men's shower gels, female endorsers have appeared gradually. Debevec, Iyer [5] and Whipple, Courtney [6] all argued that when the product gender was inconsistent with the endorser's gender, the attention of consumers could be stimulated, thereby generating a positive advertising effectiveness. However, the influence of gender consistency between endorser and advertising audience on the advertising effectiveness was unknown.

According to the scholar's hypothesis and related phenomena, this study makes a bold inference: when the gender of the opposite-sex endorser is inconsistent with that of the advertising audience, i.e., there is a gender conflict, the advertisement is more likely to stimulate the attention of the audience, and will not make the audience feel uncomfortable easily. The advertisement will generate interests among audiences and stimulate purchase behaviors, thereby achieving a positive advertising effectiveness.

Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: The endorser gender conflict has a positive impact on advertising effectiveness.

This study further divided advertising effectiveness into attitude towards the advertisement and attitude towards the product itself. Therefore, hypothesis H1 is further divided into H1a and H1b.

H1a: The endorser gender conflict has a positive impact on consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement.

H1b: The endorser gender conflict has a positive impact on consumers' attitudes towards the product itself.

As the current era has become more and more open, the products that were not discussed openly traditionally, such as sanitary napkins and condoms, have been appearing more and more frequently under the public eye. However, currently there is still no supporting data for whether or not the advertising audience will have a psychological resistance against the advertisement when an opposite-sex endorser is used to endorse a very intimate product.

This study believes that, when the product endorsed by the opposite-sex endorser has a high intimacy, the advertising audience will generate a psychological resistance against the advertisement, thereby having a negative impact on the advertising effectiveness. Therefore, a second hypothesis is proposed in the current study.

H2: The personal intimacy of the product has a positive impact on the effectiveness of the advertisement.

This study further differentiated the advertising effect into attitudes towards the advertisement and attitudes towards the product itself, so the hypothesis H2 is subdivided into H2a and H2b.

H2a: The personal intimacy of a product has a positive impact on consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement.

H2b: The personal intimacy of a product has a positive impact on the consumers' attitudes towards the product.

After reading and synthesizing the literatures, this study obtained a research architecture as shown in Figure 1.

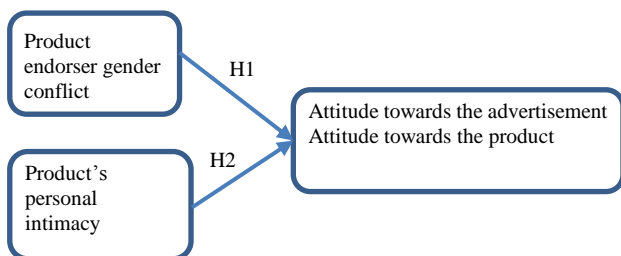


Fig. 1. Research architecture.

The variable operation types are defined as follows:

Product endorser gender conflict: It refers to whether the physiological gender of the endorser is consistent with that of the advertising audience. If consistent: no gender conflict. If not consistent: gender conflict.

Product's personal intimacy: It refers to whether the product endorsed by the opposite-sex endorser is intimate. The intimacy refers to the product that is not openly discussed in the traditional concept. For example, male endorsers endorse sanitary napkins, women's underwear, and female endorsers endorse condoms, etc. Non-intimacy refers to male endorsers endorsing lipstick, women's perfume, and female endorsers endorsing men's razors, men's shower gel and so on.

Attitude towards the advertisement: The degree of preference of advertising audience towards the advertisement.

Attitude towards the product: The degree of preference of advertising audience towards the advertised product.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, a total of 326 questionnaires were collected. After repeated examinations, the invalid questionnaires were removed, and a total of 320 copies of the questionnaire were collected. The recovery ratio was 98.16%.

In terms of gender, there are more female participants. The number of female participants was 202, accounting for 63.13%. The number of male participants was 118, accounting for 36.88%.

In terms of age group, the participants were mostly concentrated in the range between 19 to 22 years old, accounting for 57.5% of the total sample. In addition,

participants under the age of 18 accounted for 1.25% of the total sample, participants of age between 23 and 30 accounted for 26.88% of the total sample, and those over the age of 30 accounted for 14.38% of the total sample. The statistical table is as shown in Table I.

A. Analysis Results

The results of the research hypothesis analysis of this study are shown in Table II. It can be seen that the two research hypotheses proposed in this study are not supported by statistical data.

TABLE I: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF SUBJECTS

Participant age range	Number of participants	Proportion in the total sample
Under 18	4	1.25%
19 to 22	184	57.5%
23 to 30	86	26.88%
Over 30	46	14.38%

TABLE II: RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS ANALYSIS RESULTS

Research hypothesis	Analysis result
H1a	Not support
H1b	Not support
H2a	Not support
H2b	Not support

B. Classification Using Gender and Age

This study further divided the samples into groups and tried to test the influence of endorser gender conflict and product intimacy on the advertising effectiveness for different age and gender groups.

According to the analysis results by gender group, the hypothesis of this study was still invalid for the male sample. However, for the female sample, the opposite-sex endorser had a significant positive influence on the attitudes towards the advertisement and the attitudes towards the product. The product's personal intimacy also had a positive impact on the attitudes towards the advertisement. The detailed results are shown in Table III.

TABLE III: ANALYSIS RESULTS OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESES BY GENDER GROUP

Research hypothesis	Analysis result	
	Male (n=118)	Female (n=202)
H1a	Not support	Support
H1b	Not support	Support
H2a	Not support	Support
H2b	Not support	Not support

According to the analysis results by age group which are shown in Table IV, the hypotheses of this study were still invalid whether it was the sample under 22 years old or over 23 years old.

TABLE IV: ANALYSIS RESULTS OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESES BY AGE GROUP

Research hypothesis	Analysis result	
	Under 22 (n=188)	Over 23 (n=132)
H1a	Not support	Not support
H1b	Not support	Not support
H2a	Not support	Not support
H2b	Not support	Not support

V. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

For female consumers, when the product endorser is of an opposite-sex, there is a positive impact on the attitudes towards the advertisement and the product itself. When the product has personal intimacy, there is also a positive impact on the attitudes towards the advertisement. However, for male consumers, both opposite-sex endorser and product intimacy have no significant influence. The research results of this study are quite consistent with the current advertising trend on the market. More and more male celebrities endorse women’s intimate products, while men’s products are mainly endorsed by male celebrities.

In the age of rapid information circulation, the social atmosphere is more and more open and the consumers’ concept about intimate product is becoming increasingly blurred. The consumers are gradually accustomed to the endorsement of intimate product by opposite-sex endorsers. There are more and more advertisements endorsed by opposite-sex endorsers in today’s society. Consumers no longer have too much psychological resistance and surprise, but rather have a deeper impression as a result of the big contrast, thereby achieving a better advertising effectiveness.

A. Suggestions for the Future

This study investigated the influence of opposite-sex endorser and product’s personal intimacy on the advertising effectiveness. However, this study adopted a separate survey method. In the future, it is suggested to use the disturbance variable to investigate the interaction between the two. This way, a deeper understanding could be obtained regarding these two variables.

This study only discussed the influence of intimacy and gender conflict on the advertisement of opposite-sex endorsers. However, whether the study would be affected by factors such as the endorser’s popularity and the advertising audience’s preference for the endorser, and how much the

research results would be affected, no related literature has been found. Therefore, future studies could investigate the above factors.

B. Study Limitations

This study used regional sampling for sample collection. The questionnaire respondents were mostly concentrated in Guangdong, China. There is a certain extent of regional limitation.

In the academia, there are very few studies on the opposite-sex endorsement and the number of literatures is insufficient.

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