

# Celebrity Endorsement for Nonprofit Organizations: The Role of Experience-based Fit between Celebrity and Cause

mahammad reza panahian<sup>1</sup>, saieed rasouli<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Accounting Naragh Branch, Islamic azad University, Naragh Iran

<sup>2</sup>Department of Accounting Naragh Branch, Islamic azad University, Naragh Iran

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## Abstract

Although using celebrities to raise awareness and funds for social causes is a popular technique these days, little research has offered a theoretical explanation for the effects of a celebrity's personal values on socially oriented communications. This paper, therefore, aims to investigate the role of celebrity experience with a cause, as well as the celebrity endorser's association with the not-for-profit organizations, in determining the effectiveness of the celebrity's endorsement of the cause. Results reveal that a celebrity's personal experience with the endorsed cause positively influences consumers' perceived congruence between the celebrity and the cause, attributions of the celebrity altruistic motives for the endorsement, perceptions of the celebrity credibility, and attitudes toward the celebrity and the nonprofit organization. Additionally, a celebrity associated with an organization as a founder compared to a spokesperson appears to yield more favorable perceptions of celebrity credibility and attitudes toward the celebrity and the organization. Finally, interesting interaction effects between the celebrity-cause fit and the celebrity's association with the nonprofit organization emerged. Findings of the present study provide insights into the potential benefits and liabilities of using a celebrity to promote a social cause in the nonprofit sector.

**Keywords:** attribution, celebrity endorsement, congruence, nonprofit organization, source credibility

## 1. Introduction

The not-for-profit sector is undergoing a significant burst of enthusiasm over the potential uses of marketing approaches (Andreasen, Goodstein, & Wilson, 2005; Andreasen & Kotler, 2003). In particular, using celebrities to raise awareness and funds for socially worthy causes is a popular technique these days. To date, many celebrities have supported organizations that address global health issues, and have been actively involved in campaigns that strongly impact the public's awareness, gathering millions of dollars in donations for research or attention from policy-makers. Indeed, most modern celebrities seem to include the role of health advocate in their job description (msn.com, 2014). While some celebrities support a disease they or a loved one is stricken by, others raise public awareness for diseases they have very little experience with by being spokespersons for nonprofit organizations. Moreover, many celebrities start eponymous charities and launch web sites to raise money, with the goal of helping scientists fund treatments and cures.

Admittedly, celebrity endorsement is also a prevalent communication strategy in the field of advertising for profitable organizations. Approximately 20% of television advertisements in the United States feature a renowned person as an endorser (Shimp, 2007). Celebrity endorsers, referred to as "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement" (McCracken, 1989, p. 310), are frequently used to enhance products' advertising effectiveness. The positive effects of celebrity endorsers have been documented in terms of enhancing message recall (Friedman & Friedman, 1979) and brand recognition (Petty et al., 1983), generating favorable attitudes toward ads and brands (Atkin & Block, 1983), and making the ads more effective by appropriately matching celebrity endorsers to specific brands (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Misra & Beatty, 1990). In particular, if a celebrity with a high level of expertise (i.e., knowledge, experience, and skills) endorses a product in a relevant field, the consumer's attitude tends to be positively influenced toward the product, and consumer purchase intentions rise (Ohanian, 1991). This is part of what elicits a good fit between the product and the

celebrity (Till & Busler, 1998; Till & Busler, 2000).

While most research focuses on the effects of celebrity endorsers on demand for consumer products and services, little research has offered a theoretical explanation for the effects of a celebrity's personal values on socially oriented communications. Moreover, research on the impact of the relationships between a celebrity and the not-for-profit organization that the celebrity sponsors is scarce. This paper, therefore, aims to investigate the effects of a celebrity endorser's experience with a cause, as well as the celebrity endorser's association with the not-for-profit organizations, on individuals' attitudinal responses to the cause/organization. The study's findings highlight the source effects of consequential responses, such as the perceptions of and attitudes towards the cause-celebrity pairing, the celebrity, the advertisement, the not-for-profit organization, and the cause, based on how a celebrity is personally connected to a cause and/or organization.

## **2. Literature Review**

Given that marketing-related research for not-for-profits has been scarce, understanding the theoretical background of for-profit companies' marketing strategies may help us to conceptualize the background for non-profit marketing. In that spirit, we may assume that one of the most popular marketing techniques – celebrity-associated promotion – can be introduced with great success to non-profit organizations. Indeed, several theories and models have been created to explain the relationships between celebrities and the brands they endorse, and the subsequent effects of celebrity endorsements on consumers' attitudinal responses.

### *2.1 Source Expertise versus Experience*

Researchers suggest that a source's perceived expertise has a positive effect on consumers' attitude toward a product or service. Expertise describes an endorser's knowledge, experience or skills as perceived by the target audience (Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1990). A source's expertise may be the most important dimension of its credibility (McGuire, 1968), and is found to be more persuasive than source trustworthiness (Speck, Schumann, & Thompson, 1988). Research on source expertise also indicates that the perceived expertise of a source exerts a positive influence on consumer attitudes. Indeed, consumers who view an advertisement featuring an endorser with a high level of expertise and/or experience are more likely to be favorably disposed toward the endorser as well as the ad (Homer & Kahle, 1986; Maddux & Rogers, 1980). Moreover, considering celebrity credibility constructs (i.e., trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness), a celebrity's trustworthiness is not significantly related to a consumer's purchase intentions, whereas a celebrity's expertise has a more positive impact on a consumer's intentions to purchase the brand (Ohanian, 1991). In accordance with this fact, an endorser's perceived expertise is the major determinant when organizations attempt to match products with celebrities for advertisement (Till & Busler, 1998; Till & Busler, 2000).

While expertise has been investigated as a key dimension of source credibility in numerous studies, the field still lacks a uniform conceptualization of "expertise." Although the widely-held definition describes expertise as an endorser's knowledge, experience, and skills, Jacoby et al. (1986) make a clear distinction between experience and expertise, asserting that expertise involves a qualitatively higher level of knowledge and/or skill than experience. Along the same line, Braunsberger and Munch (1998) suggest that more specific definitions of experience and expertise are necessary; "experience is defined as displaying a relatively high degree of familiarity with a certain subject area, which is obtained through some type of exposure, whereas expertise is defined as having a high degree of skill in/knowledge of a certain subject area, which is obtained through some type of formal training" (p. 25). Consumers' evaluation of a source's experience requires them to collect more information about a source's (e.g., a doctor's) qualifications than an assessment of the source's expertise, because experience is an ambiguous and subjective concept in hospital marketing.

Preliminary empirical evidence also suggests that celebrities are more effective endorsers when they are personally connected to a cause, meaning that they should be selected based on their relevancy to the causes, rather than their attractiveness, familiarity or likability (Wheeler, 2002; 2009). This rationale was then applied to the role of a spokesperson's personal experience with a cause in enhancing the perceived credibility of a Public Service Announcement (PSA) that solicited contributions for victims of Hurricane Katrina (Toncar, Reid, & Anderson, 2007). In a similar vein, several researchers have addressed the effects of the disclosure of the celebrity "Magic" Johnson's HIV infection on the health risk perceptions of the public (e.g., Brown & Basil, 1995; Brown, Basil, & Bocamea, 2003).

### *2.2 Commitment*

Commitment refers to an implicit or explicit pledge of relational continuity between exchange partners as the most advanced phase of partner-interdependence (Dwyer et al., 1987), or is defined as "an enduring desire to

maintain a valued relationship” (Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande, 1992, p.316). A partner’s commitment is established on the basis of three important assumptions: relatively high levels of the partner’s inputs to the association, durability of the association over time, and consistency with which the inputs are made to the association (Dwyer et al., 1987; Scanzoni, 1979; Wetzels, Ruyter, & Birgelen, 1998). Relatively high degrees of input, durability, and consistency are an integral part of the association between parties, depending on the willingness of the participants to preserve the relationship; indeed, many parties purposefully engage resources to maintain such a relationship in a semi-permanent state of commitment phase (Dwyer et al., 1987). The sponsor’s level of commitment, which is greatly desired, can be also reinforced by increasing the costs of transaction or lessening the obstacles associated with interacting with an alternative exchange partner (Dwyer et al., 1987).

In the cause-related marketing the commitment of a company to a cause is a determinant of judging whether the company is viewed as exploiting the cause (L’Etang, 1994). In particular, the durability of the association between company and cause over time is a major factor of leading to successful campaigns. Varadarajan and Menon (1988) proposed that a long-term commitment might indicate a “real” commitment to the effort and suggest values-driven motives, due to the fact that consumers have more time to learn about a company-cause relationship. On the other hand, consumers view a short-term commitment as driven by strategic performance demands, reactive, or self-serving motives. Similarly, Webb and Mohr (1998) indicated that the length of time committed to a cause was used as a cue for evaluating a company’s motives: while shorter term commitments were regarded as just another way to boost sales, longer term commitments were regarded as well intentioned.

### *2.3 The Principle of Congruity*

Academic discourse exists concerning the congruence between the type of spokesperson and the type of product (e.g., Lynch & Schuler, 1994). Osgood and Tannenbaum (1955) propose the principle of congruity in their study of attitude-change. In fact, the congruence effect stems from the congruity theory, which deals specifically with the attitudes persons hold toward sources of information and the objects of sources’ assertions. This model assumes that judgmental frames of reference have a tendency to make maximal simplicity. Additionally, it is assumed that identity is less complex than discrimination of fine differences. In this congruity paradigm, the degree to which a person likes a source and an object will determine whether a state of congruity exists or not.

The theoretical perspective of the congruity principle is consistent with the hypotheses of many researchers who propose that celebrity and brand congruence is absolutely essential. The effectiveness of celebrity endorsement has been explained in terms of how well the image and/or personality of the celebrity fit perceptions of the product (Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001; Friedman & Friedman, 1979; Kahle & Homer, 1985). More specifically, celebrity-brand congruence enhances advertising effectiveness, increasing consumer recall of the product or service as well as the transfer of affect from spokesperson to brand and transfer of affect toward the brand in itself (Misra & Beatty, 1990). Furthermore, congruence generates consumer perceptions that the celebrity may be believed, and creates a more favorable attitude toward the product (Kamins & Gupta, 1994). Similarly, the product match-up hypothesis maintains that a good fit between messages conveyed by the celebrity image and the product leads to effective advertisement (Kamins, 1990); under the condition that celebrities are well-paired with the brands, consumers’ brand attitudes are not only positively influenced, but become resistant to extinction, as well (Till, Stanley, & Priluck, 2008).

### *2.4 Attribution Theory*

Attribution theory, which posits that individuals make causal inferences that allow them to understand and predict events they observe and experience, describes the personal factors internal to the actor (called intrinsic motives) and the situational factors that are external to the actor (called extrinsic motives) (Heider, 1958). Under the theoretical perspective, consumers attribute motives to celebrities when celebrities endorse products, and seek to determine the causal reasons for celebrities to endorse certain products. The attribution theory provides a comprehensive theoretical framework of how individuals make causal inferences to understand and predict events that they face by suggesting two principles: augmentation principles and discounting principles (Kelly, 1973). According to Kelly (1973), the augmentation principle explains situations where extrinsic factors function as inhibitory factors (e.g. monetary loss), whereas intrinsic factors assume the role of facilitative factors. In this case, individuals are most likely to augment the role of internal motivation of events. Despite the possibility of some monetary loss, if a celebrity makes a socially responsible choice such as being a founder or spokesperson of a not-for-profit organization, publics would evaluate the celebrity’s ethical standard as the primary reason for the socially-responsible behavior. On the other hand, consumers thereby discount the sponsor’s intrinsic motive when they infer that celebrities make endorsements merely for the sake of financial compensation (which is an

extrinsic motive) rather than for their belief in the product's quality (which is an intrinsic motive) (Mowen & Brown, 1981). Notably, unless it is clearly stated that the celebrity endorser did not receive financial compensation for an endorsement, consumers are more likely to infer that the endorsement occurred because the celebrity believed in the positive characteristics of the product or because of external factors, such as monetary incentives (Moore, Mown, & Reardon, 1994; Rifon, Choi, Trimble, & Li, 2004; Sparkman, 1982).

### **3. Hypotheses**

#### *3.1 The Role of Celebrity Experience*

Research in the area of hospital marketing suggests that it is easier to evaluate a source's expertise rather than his/her experience because information about the source's professional qualifications is usually straightforward (Braunsberger & Munch, 1998). On the other hand, a source (e.g., a celebrity) which does not necessarily have professional skills and knowledge, but does have personal experience with certain issues, is able to influence consumers to a greater extent. Indeed, a celebrity's expertise on certain social or health causes seems difficult to assess unless the celebrity is a known specialist in a related area. It is very unlikely that a celebrity possesses professional knowledge or skills on certain diseases, obtained through some type of formal training; instead, a celebrity's association with a certain cause may be determined greatly and easily by the public mind through the celebrity's actual experience.

The role of a celebrity's experience in determining the effectiveness of cause promotion can be examined in a variety of ways. First, celebrity expertise is found to be a determinant of appropriately matching brands with celebrities (Ohanian, 1991; Till & Busler, 1998; Till & Busler, 2000); applying this fact to the condition of celebrity endorsement for health causes, it can be assumed that the celebrity's personal experience with a certain cause may serve as a major match-up factor for logically associating the celebrity with a cause. Indeed, a celebrity's personal experience pertaining to the health cause would represent a high level of celebrity involvement with the cause, which would inevitably lead to a consistent, compatible, and congruent association between the celebrity and cause. The degree of the perceived fit between the celebrity and cause would increase as the public gives notice of the experience-based association between celebrity and cause. In that sense, a celebrity's personal experience would elicit higher individual perceptions of the congruence between celebrity and cause by serving as a logical cue to explain why the celebrity promotes the cause.

A celebrity's personal experience with a cause may also influence individual consumers' inference of the celebrity's motives behind his/her promotion of the cause. Following the attribution theory, when people are not aware of a celebrity's motives for endorsement and there exist no salient cues that the celebrity does not endorse the cause for the sake of his/her reputation or for monetary incentives, they are more likely to discount the possible intrinsic motives of the celebrity (which would include the celebrity's beliefs in the importance of the cause) and make extrinsic attributions instead (Moore, Mowen, & Reardon, 1994; Mowen & Brown, 1981; Sparkman, 1982). For these reasons, a celebrity's endorsement of a cause should be more effective when people believe that the celebrity engages in such an act due to his or her intrinsic, altruistic motives. Following this logic, a celebrity's personal experience with a promoted cause may be perceived as a factor that is internal to the actor and thereby triggers intrinsic motives. Such an experience may simultaneously serve as a salient cue for consumers to make a logical association between the celebrity and the cause while preventing people from scrutinizing the motives behind the celebrity's act of promoting the cause. Hence, a celebrity's personal experience directly pertaining to a cause would enhance consumers' attributions of intrinsic, socially responsible motives to the sponsor.

Notably, perceptions of congruence based on celebrities' personal experiences may affect individuals' attributions of altruistic motives. Osgood and Tannenbaum's (1955) congruity theory suggests that congruent conditions between a source (celebrity) and an object (cause) yield maximum simplicity, which in turn reduces individuals' unnecessary evaluation of the source and the object. When a good fit between two entities exists, the degree of consumers' skepticism about the celebrity's motives should be minimal because less cognitive evaluation of the celebrity's motives is necessary. On the other hand, a celebrity-cause mismatch may generate greater elaboration and encourage attributions of self-serving or insincere celebrity endorser motives.

The relationship among variables can be further understood by analyzing the sequential effects of the variables. Previous research of celebrity endorsement suggests that a celebrity whose image is congruent with the endorsed product elicits greater advertiser and celebrity believability, and thereby generates a favorable attitude toward the brand (Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Misra & Beaty, 1990). Similarly, sponsor-cause congruence enhances consumers' attributions of altruistic sponsor motives and sponsor credibility (Rifon, Choi, Trimble, & Li, 2004). Along these lines, when individuals attribute extrinsic motives (i.e., money- or reputation-gains) to a celebrity endorsing a

cause, the celebrity is less frequently perceived as credible by consumers (Moore, Mowen, & Reardon, 1994; Sparkman, 1982). Consequently, individuals' attitudes toward the celebrity endorser and the endorsed cause might be determined by consumers' credibility perceptions of the celebrity through judgments about the celebrity's motive. Such judgments would enhance attitudes toward the celebrity endorser. Using this logic, it is probable that a celebrity's personal experience with a certain disease would positively influence consumer attitudes toward the celebrity who endorses a relevant health cause. Consequently, attitudes toward the advertisement and the non-profit organization would rise as well. Indeed, celebrity credibility has been found to have a positive impact on consumer attitudes toward an ad and toward a brand (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000). Applying this finding to the present study, it can be expected that if a celebrity who has experienced a certain disease promotes a cause related to the disease, consumers would be more accepting of the endorsement message, and show more positive attitudes toward the involved parties. Therefore, the following hypotheses are posited:

H1: A celebrity with personal experience with the endorsed cause will cause: (a) higher celebrity-cause congruence; (b) higher attribution of altruistic motives; (c) lower attribution of self-serving motives; (d) higher perception of celebrity credibility (i.e. trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness); (e) more positive attitude toward the celebrity; (f) more positive attitude toward the organization.

### *3.2 The Role of a Celebrity's Association with an Organization*

Celebrity-nonprofit organization association types are expected to affect individual perceptions of celebrity-cause pairings and credibility, attributions of celebrity motives, and subsequent attitudes. Depending on whether a celebrity is a founder or spokesperson of a nonprofit organization, individuals' overall responses to the degree of a celebrity's commitment to the associated organization may vary. A celebrity who is the founder rather than the spokesperson of an organization is more likely to show higher levels of inputs to the organization with significant economic and/or emotional resources exchanged, and a continuous investment in the relations between founder and organization as a long-term contract may be expected (Dwyer et al., 1987; Wetzels, Ruyter, & Birgelen, 1998). A celebrity-founder's commitment to the organization also incorporates a relatively high degree of increased reliance by the founder on the outcomes of the exchange (Dwyer et al., 1987).

Practically speaking, the most important criteria for selecting a celebrity for a nonprofit organization are credibility and partnership (Durham, 1997), and the most desirable relationship between an organization and a celebrity is one in which the parties view each other as partners and sign a contract agreement detailing out each partner's responsibilities (Wheeler, 2003). Of particular note is when a celebrity shows the best commitment to a social or health cause by creating a nonprofit organization that is devoted to the cause. It may be expected that a celebrity as founder is more likely to concur with the organization's mission and understand its long-term plan as well as commit to investing the needed to achieve the organization's goals.

Hence, a celebrity-founder may be viewed as having a higher level of commitment than a spokesperson. This perception may lead to consumers' increased perception of celebrity-organization pairings and attribution of a celebrity's motives to an intrinsic cause. A celebrity's relationship with the organization s/he supports may also determine people's judgment of the celebrity's credibility, as well as their attitudes toward the celebrity, the endorsement message, and the organization. Following this logic, the following hypotheses are formulated accordingly:

H2: A celebrity as founder creates: (a) higher celebrity-cause congruence; (b) higher attribution of altruistic motives; (c) lower attribution of self-serving motives; (d) higher perception of celebrity credibility (i.e., trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness); (e) more positive attitudes toward the celebrity; and (f) greater positive attitudes toward the organization.

### *3.3 Interaction Effects*

Consumers' overall responses to a celebrity endorser and the endorsed cause may be more favorable for the celebrity if they are a founder rather than a spokesperson, yet these outcomes may vary depending on the celebrity's type of experience with the cause. In general, when services offered by not-for-profit organizations are difficult to evaluate due to their intangible and complex nature (Shabbir, Palihawadana, & Thwaites, 2007), a high level of celebrity experience with the endorsed cause may enhance the tangibility of non-profit services and causes, while simultaneously enhancing the consumers' positive assessments of the celebrity endorsement. A celebrity's personal experience with a cause may be explained as the qualification expected to be a charity founder. The phenomenon of the effect of celebrity's personal experience on a cause can be also explained by the concept of trust, which refers to a belief or expectation about the trustworthiness of a partner, and which results from the expertise, reliability, and intention of the source. Trust may be regarded as a key cognitive indicator of

individuals' assessments of the quality of the relationship that exists between a celebrity and a charity he/she supports (Sargeant & Lee, 2004), and the existence of trust may reduce consumers' overall uncertainty, vulnerability, and fear of risk concerning the services that the charity provides (Shabbir, Palihawadana, & Thwaites, 2007).

Following this logic, when people may think a celebrity endorser, labeled founder rather than spokesperson, is familiar with an endorsed cause, people are more likely to expect and trust that the celebrity endorser has had a personal experience with the cause. Nevertheless, if the celebrity endorser has no experience with the cause, people are more likely to distrust an endorser who is the founder. Consequently, a non-experienced celebrity serving as founder would be viewed as less paired with the cause and therefore considered less altruistic, than may a celebrity serving as merely a spokesperson. Similarly, the perceived credibility of a celebrity with no experience with that cause may be lower for the founder than it would be for a celebrity who is merely a spokesperson. In addition to the logic of sequential effects on consumers' attitudinal responses, interaction effects between types of celebrity experience and association with the organization would be expected. It can therefore be formally proposed that:

H3: There will be an interaction effect between types of experience and association; specifically, there will be: (a) lower celebrity-cause congruence; (b) lower attribution of altruistic motives; (c) higher attribution of self-serving motives; (d) lower perception of celebrity credibility (i.e., trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness); (e) increased negative attitudes toward the celebrity; and (f) increased negative attitudes toward the organization, for a celebrity with no experience as opposed to a celebrity with personal experience, and that this effect will be more pronounced for a celebrity as founder than for a celebrity as spokesperson.

## 4. Method

### 4.1 Design and Stimulus Development

A 3 X 2 between-subjects experimental study was conducted to investigate the proposed hypotheses. The first independent variable, "type of celebrity endorser's experience," related to the associated cause varied at three levels: (1) self, (2) family, and (3) none, while the second independent variable, "type of association between the celebrity endorser and the nonprofit organization," had two levels, with the celebrity being either a founder or a spokesperson. Six scenarios and advertisements representing the experimental conditions were developed as stimuli.

The celebrities and the stories in the scenarios and the accompanying ads were all fictitious and created solely for study purposes. In the scenarios, colorectal cancer, associated with a high-fat, low-fiber diet and red meat, was chosen as the cause for the study, due to the fact that the disease is presently the third most common form of cancer and the second leading cause of cancer-related death in the U.S. Although most cases occur after age 50, there are growing concerns concerning hereditary syndromes in which the cancer can develop in young people, and that their dietary choices may increase their risk of cancer at any age. In addition, colorectal cancer is not gender specific, so both male and female subjects would find it to be relevant.

A fictitious female celebrity, *Catherine Meyer*, was presented as either the founder or spokesperson of *Colorectal Cancer Society (CCS)*, a fictitious nonprofit organization for colorectal cancer. The six versions of experimental stimuli were prepared in the forms of a scenario which provided background information and a corresponding print advertisement that featured a picture of the celebrity and a headline which read: "*Are you the picture of health?*" Information on the cancer was placed at the bottom of the advertisement. The executional formats and layouts were identical across the six experimental conditions. The only differences were the manipulations of the two independent variables, the celebrity's mention of personal reasons for endorsing the cause and the celebrity's role in relation to the organization (see Appendix A).

### 4.2 Participants and the Data Collection Procedure

A total of 164 undergraduate students (41 males and 123 females), who were recruited from advertising classes from a large Southwestern university. Participated in this study in exchange for a course of extra credit. Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to understand individual reactions to a celebrity endorsing a socially worthy cause. Participants were randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions. Upon consenting to take part in the Web-based study, participants were asked to read their given scenario, view the corresponding advertisement, and then fill out the questionnaire, which consisted of measures of celebrity-cause congruence, attributions of altruistic celebrity motives, perceived celebrity credibility, as well as attitudes toward the celebrity, the ad, and the non-profit organization, and resultant donation and cancer screening intents along with involvement with the cause.

### 4.3 Measures

#### 4.3.1 Celebrity-cause Congruence

The congruence between celebrity and cause was measured on a four-item, seven-point scale anchored by not consistent/consistent, not a good fit/a good fit, not congruent/congruent, and not compatible/compatible (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .92$ ). One item (not consistent/consistent) was added into Rifon, Choi, Trimble, and Li's (2004) three-item, seven-point scale (not a good fit/a good fit, not congruent/congruent, and not compatible/compatible).

#### 4.3.2 Celebrity Motive

In order to assess participants' attributions to the celebrity's altruistic and self-serving motives, an eight-item Likert scale, ranging from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 7 (extremely likely), was created for this study. First, the self-serving motives were measured via five items, including celebrity's concern for public attention and exposure, and her concern for public image, including image improvement, image enhancement, and the creation of positive images (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$ ). Second, the participants' perception of the celebrity's altruistic motives was gauged via three statements, which included the celebrity's concern about the cause, belief in the cause, and concern about public health in general (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .81$ ).

#### 4.3.3 Celebrity Credibility

Ohanian's (1990) 15-item semantic differential scale was used to measure the celebrity endorser's perceived credibility on three dimensions: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. Each five-item, seven-point scale was anchored by undependable/dependable, dishonest/honest, unreliable/reliable, insincere/sincere, and untrustworthy/trustworthy in the dimension of trustworthiness (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .92$ ), by inexpert/expert, inexperienced/experienced, unknowledgeable/knowledgeable, unqualified/qualified, and unskilled/skilled in the expertise dimension (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$ ), and by unattractive/attractive, not classy/classy, ugly/beautiful, plain/elegant, and not sexy/sexy in the attractiveness dimension (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .83$ ).

#### 4.3.4 Attitudes toward Celebrity and Organization

Based on MacKenzie and Lutz's (1989) measurement for attitudes, subjects were asked to rate their overall impression of the celebrity (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$ ) and the non-profit organization (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .85$ ) on a three-item, seven-point bipolar adjective scale which was anchored by good/bad, favorable/unfavorable, and pleasant/unpleasant.

#### 4.3.5 Involvement with Issue

In order to measure the effects of the confounding covariate, based on Flora and Maibach's (1990) measurement for concerns about health issues, involvement (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .86$ ) was measured with a four-item, Likert scale, ranging from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 7 (extremely likely). The specific statements were: "I think colorectal cancer is a great deal," "I consider myself at risk for developing colorectal cancer," "Colorectal cancer is a personally relevant topic for me," and "I actively seek the most recent information about colorectal cancer."

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Manipulation Check

To check if respondents processed the scenario and advertisement properly, they were asked to answer two questions about who was diagnosed with the disease and what the relationship was between the celebrity and the organization. With regard to the first question, 150 (91.5%) of respondents answered in line with the experimental condition to which they were assigned, while 14 (8.5%) provided incorrect answers. Regarding the celebrity endorser's association with the nonprofit organization, 157 (95.7%) respondents answered correctly, while 6 (3.7%) answered incorrectly, and 1 (0.6%) did not answer. After eliminating those who provided an incorrect answer for either question, a total of 150 responses from participants (36 males and 114 females) who answered both questions correctly were kept in the sample for analysis, resulting in 25 participants for each cell.

### 5.2 Factor Analysis of Celebrity Motive

A two-factor solution regarding the celebrity's motives, accounting for 70.3% of the total variance, resulted from a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation (see Table 1). A total of twelve items were initially tested, but four cross-loaded items were removed. As a result, five items relevant to the celebrity's concern for her reputation-gain constituted Factor 1, labeled "self-serving motive"; three items relevant to the celebrity's genuine concern for the cause were loaded on Factor 2 and labeled "altruistic motive." Factor loadings and descriptive statistics of the individual items are presented in Table 1. An index variable was created for each factor by averaging up the corresponding items, resulting in a self-serving motive (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$ ) and an altruistic motive (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .78$ ).

Table 1. Celebrity motive factor analysis results

Item	Factor loading		Means	Std. Deviation
	Factor 1: self-serving	Factor 2: altruistic		
M1. Attention	.836	-.050	3.39	1.57
M2. Exposure	.811	-.156	3.86	1.56
M3. Improves image	.823	-.133	3.93	1.59
M4. Positive image	.745	-.430	3.23	1.52
M5. Enhances image	.823	-.192	3.90	1.61
M6. Cares cause	-.148	.852	5.74	1.04
M7. Believes cause	-.188	.858	5.71	1.23
M8. Cares public health	-.126	.749	4.94	1.24
Eigenvalues	3.338	2.290		

Motive 1: Catherine Meyer bolsters the cause to receive attention.

Motive 2: Catherine Meyer appears in the ad to get exposure.

Motive 3: Catherine Meyer becomes associated with the cause to improve her image.

Motive 4: Catherine Meyer does the ad only because it creates a positive celebrity image.

Motive 5: Catherine Meyer appears in the ad to enhance her public image.

Motive 6: Catherine Meyer appears in the ad because she cares about colorectal cancer.

Motive 7: Catherine Meyer does the ad because she really believes in the importance of raising awareness of colorectal cancer.

Motive 8: Catherine Meyer does the ad because ultimately she cares about public health.

### 5.3 Hypothesis Tests

Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses with the covariate of involvement with issue to determine the main effects of the celebrity's experience and association with regard to the cause/organization and the interaction effects between them. With the involvement level as a covariate, MANCOVA results showed that issue involvement offered no significant adjustment to the dependent variables,  $F(1, 143) = 1.13, p > .1$ . With the use of Wilks' lambda criterion, the combined dependent variables were significantly affected by the level of experience (Wilks'  $\lambda = .592, F(16, 272) = 5.09, p < .001$ ), and the interaction between experience and association (Wilks'  $\lambda = .819, F(16, 272) = 1.78, p < .05$ ). Also, the effects of the type of association on the dependent variables were marginally significant (Wilks'  $\lambda = .904, F(8, 136) = 1.79, p < .1$ ).

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the main effects of the celebrity's personal experience with the endorsed cause would produce: (a) perceived celebrity-cause congruence; (b) attribution of celebrity altruistic motives; (c) attribution of celebrity self-serving motives; (d) perception of celebrity credibility (i.e., trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness); (e) attitude toward the celebrity; and (f) attitude toward the organization. Specifically, participants' responses were expected to be more positive in the scenario where the endorsement was made by a celebrity with personal experience than by a celebrity with no experience. As seen in Table 2, the main effects of experience type were significant for: celebrity-cause congruence,  $F(2, 143) = 15.33, p < .001$ ; attribution of celebrity altruistic motives,  $F(2, 143) = 10.32, p < .001$ ; attribution of celebrity self-serving motives,  $F(2, 143) = 10.67, p < .001$ ; the perceived celebrity trustworthiness,  $F(2, 143) = 5.38, p < .01$ ; and the perceived celebrity expertise,  $F(2, 143) = 21.37, p < .001$ . However, the main effect for the perceived celebrity attractiveness was not significant,  $F(2, 143) = .88, p > .1$ . In addition, the main effects of experience type were significant for: celebrity attitude,  $F(2, 143) = 6.01, p < .01$ ; and organization attitude,  $F(2, 143) = 3.25, p < .05$ . Hence, the hypotheses: H1(a), (b), (c), (e) and (f) were supported, and H1(d) was partially supported.

Table 2. A summary of statistical tests

Dependent variable	Experience type main effect	Association type main effect	Experience association	X
Celebrity-cause congruence	F = 15.33***	F = 2.27	F = 1.92	
Altruistic attribution	F = 10.32***	F = .17	F = 4.57*	
Self-serving attribution	F = 10.67***	F = .66	F = .17	
Celebrity trustworthiness	F = 5.38**	F = 4.07*	F = 3.27*	
Celebrity expertise	F = 21.37***	F = 6.13*	F = 4.74*	
Celebrity attractiveness	F = .88	F = .30	F = 1.00	
Attitude toward celebrity	F = 6.01**	F = 6.27*	F = .02	
Attitude toward organization	F = 3.25*	F = 3.97*	F = .78	

Note. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

To further analyze the effects of celebrity experience type on individual perception, Tukey's HSD test for pair-wise comparisons was undertaken (see Table 3). As seen from the last column in Table 3, participants responded more favorably when the cause was endorsed by a celebrity who was diagnosed with the disease for



herself than when it was endorsed by a celebrity who had no relevance with the disease: celebrity-cause congruence ( $M_{self}=5.34$ ;  $M_{none}=4.31$ ), celebrity altruistic attribution ( $M_{self}=5.93$ ;  $M_{none}=5.16$ ), celebrity self-serving attribution ( $M_{self}=3.53$ ;  $M_{none}=4.28$ ), celebrity trustworthiness ( $M_{self}=5.56$ ;  $M_{none}=5.04$ ), celebrity expertise ( $M_{self}=5.06$ ;  $M_{none}=3.93$ ), attitude toward celebrity ( $M_{self}=5.46$ ;  $M_{none}=4.87$ ), and attitude toward organization ( $M_{self}=5.86$ ;  $M_{none}=5.40$ ). In conclusion, the congruence effects, celebrity attribution motives, celebrity credibility, and attitudes toward celebrity, ad, and organization were significantly less positive when the celebrity has no experience than when she has had first-hand experience by herself and/or by her family.

Table 3. Pair-wise comparisons of means for experience type (mean difference)

Dependent variable	Self vs. Family	Family vs. None	None vs. Self
Congruence	5.34 vs. 4.99 (.35)	4.99 vs. 4.31 (.68)*	4.31 vs. 5.34 (-1.03)*
Altruistic	5.93 vs. 5.30 (.63)*	5.30 vs. 5.16 (.14)	5.16 vs. 5.93 (-.77)*
Self-serving	3.53 vs. 3.16 (.36)	3.16 vs. 4.28 (-1.12)*	4.28 vs. 3.53 (.75)*
Trustworthiness	5.56 vs. 5.43 (.13)	5.43 vs. 5.04 (.39)*	5.04 vs. 5.56 (-.52)*
Expertise	5.06 vs. 4.37 (.69)*	4.37 vs. 3.93 (.44)*	3.93 vs. 5.06 (-1.13)*
Celebrity attitude	5.46 vs. 5.30 (.16)	5.30 vs. 4.87 (.43)*	4.87 vs. 5.46 (-.59)*
Organization attitude	5.86 vs. 5.56 (.30)	5.56 vs. 5.40 (.16)	5.40 vs. 5.86 (-.46)*

Note. \*  $p < .05$ .

Hypothesis 2 anticipated that a celebrity-founder of the nonprofit organization he/she endorses would create: (a) higher perceived celebrity-cause congruence; (b) higher attribution of celebrity higher motives; (c) lower attribution of self-serving motives; (d) higher perception of celebrity credibility (i.e., trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness); (e) increased positive attitude toward the celebrity; and (f) increased positive attitude toward the organization, than they would if the celebrity's relationship was that of a spokesperson. As seen in Table 2, the main effects of association type were statistically significant for the perceived celebrity trustworthiness,  $F(1, 143) = 4.07$ ,  $p < .05$ ; celebrity expertise,  $F(1, 143) = 6.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ; celebrity attitude,  $F(1, 143) = 6.27$ ,  $p < .05$ ; and the organization attitude,  $F(1, 143) = 3.97$ ,  $p < .05$ . Nevertheless, no significant main effects for the other dependent variables were found: celebrity-cause congruence,  $F(1, 143) = 2.27$ ,  $p > .1$ ; celebrity altruistic attribution,  $F(1, 143) = .17$ ,  $p > .1$ ; celebrity self-serving attribution,  $F(1, 143) = .66$ ,  $p > .1$ ; celebrity attractiveness,  $F(1, 143) = .30$ ,  $p > .1$ . Therefore, H2(e) and (f) were confirmed, and H2(d) was partially confirmed; but H2 (a), (b) and (c) were disconfirmed.

Table 4. Cell means and standard deviations

Dependent variable	Founder			Spokesperson		
	Self (n=25)	Family (n=25)	None (n=25)	Self (n=25)	Family (n=25)	None (n=25)
Congruence	5.49 (1.03)	5.29 (.87)	4.23 (1.02)	5.20 (1.03)	4.70 (.84)	4.39 (.87)
Self-serving	3.64 (1.65)	3.16 (1.00)	4.42 (1.41)	3.42 (1.16)	3.16 (1.00)	4.15 (.98)
Altruistic	6.06 (.80)	5.53 (.88)	4.88 (.86)	5.80 (.83)	5.06 (1.01)	5.44 (.98)
Attractiveness	4.72 (.91)	4.62 (.68)	4.30 (.72)	4.40 (.96)	2.56 (.90)	4.46 (1.01)
Trustworthiness	5.92 (.68)	5.52 (.88)	4.99 (.78)	5.20 (.743)	5.33 (.90)	5.09 (.97)
Expertise	5.47 (.76)	4.64 (.83)	3.80 (.89)	4.66 (1.04)	4.09 (.88)	4.06 (.82)
Celebrity Attitude	5.64 (.72)	5.52 (.79)	5.04 (.80)	5.28 (1.09)	5.12 (.85)	4.71 (1.02)
Organization Attitude	5.64 (.93)	5.48 (.86)	5.04 (1.12)	5.28 (.87)	5.12 (.73)	4.70 (.89)

Hypothesis 3 implied that interaction effects take place between celebrity experience and association types with organization. As can be seen from the MANCOVA results in Table 2, there were the interaction effects on celebrity altruistic motives,  $F(2, 143) = 4.57$ ,  $p < .05$ , celebrity trustworthiness,  $F(2, 143) = 3.27$ ,  $p < .05$ ; and celebrity expertise,  $F(2, 143) = 4.74$ ,  $p < .05$ . The results revealed that the effects of celebrity experience type on individual perception of celebrity altruistic motives, celebrity trustworthiness and expertise depended primarily on association type. That is, when the celebrity and the celebrity's family were affected, the celebrity traits perceived by individuals are greater when the celebrity is a founder than when the celebrity is a spokesperson; on the other hand, in the absence of the experience-condition, the level of individual responses is higher when the celebrity is a spokesperson than when the celebrity is a founder. However, none of these interaction effects for: celebrity-cause congruence,  $F(2, 143) = 1.92$ ,  $p > .1$ ; attributions of self-serving motives,  $F(2, 143) = .15$ ,  $p > .1$ ;

individual perceptions of attractiveness,  $F(2, 143) = 1.00, p > .1$ ; celebrity attitude,  $F(2, 143) = .02, p > .1$ ; and organization attitude,  $F(2, 143) = .78, p > .1$ . Hence, H3(b) was confirmed, and H3(d) was partially confirmed; but H3(a), (c), (e), and (f) were disconfirmed. Finally, means and standard deviations for all dependent variables are shown (see Table 4).

## 6. Discussion, Limitations and Future Research

### 6.1 Discussion

All celebrities cannot be connected to all charitable organizations, and some celebrities are better suited for specific organizations than others. The present study provides useful insights into the potential benefits and liabilities of using a celebrity to promote a socially worthy cause in the nonprofit sector. Building on these insights, this study, as an initial attempt, tells us that celebrity endorsers yield more favorable attitudinal outcomes when they are personally linked to a cause and an organization. The results demonstrate that a celebrity's personal experience with the cause positively influences overall individual responses, including: the perceived congruence between celebrity and cause; attributions of celebrity altruistic/self-serving motives; the perceived celebrity trustworthiness and expertise; positive attitudes toward celebrity and organization.

Notably, this study focused on the role of celebrity-experience in the setting of nonprofit promotion, and is based on the conceptual distinction of celebrity experience from celebrity expertise that is suggested by some scholars (Braunsberger & Munch, 1998; Jacoby et al., 1986). Such a distinction has been often neglected in prior research of celebrity endorsement effectiveness. Therefore, the present study theoretically points to the need to distinguish celebrity experience from expertise in order to accurately understand celebrity credibility and endorsement effectiveness. It is difficult to find a celebrity who possesses expertise in a certain product, and personal experience might serve as a more realistic but useful factor when selecting an effective endorser for diverse products. This notion holds true for nonprofits, as well.

The findings of this study suggest that, more specifically, the highest level of celebrity experience leads to more favorable responses to the celebrity endorsement. When a celebrity is diagnosed with the cause's base-disease, individual responses to the celebrity's endorsement are generally the most positive. Interestingly, the research also addresses that people have more attributions of self-serving motives to a celebrity who has the disease, compared to a celebrity whose family member has the disease. This phenomenon may be explained by the attribution theory, which assumes that people are more likely to infer that a celebrity who is diagnosed with a disease and makes fundraising efforts, appears in order to enhance his/her reputation or collect financial compensation. Thus, this research provides nonprofit practitioners with a basic understanding of how to utilize a celebrity endorser for nonprofit cause in order to maximize the effectiveness of fundraising efforts. When a celebrity who has first-hand experience is assigned as founder and/or spokesperson, endorsement appeals should be less self-serving to consumers.

Other findings of this study are also clear. The results suggest that a celebrity endorser who builds his or her own organization is more likely to be perceived as committed, and thus generates more positive responses to both him/herself and the organization as a whole, such as celebrity trustworthiness and expertise, and attitudes toward celebrity and organization. Nevertheless, a celebrity labeled founder rather than spokesperson was found to be a significant predictor to influence individual perceptions of celebrity-cause congruence and attributions of celebrity motives. This finding indicates that whether a celebrity is founder or spokesperson only influences the responses that are directly related to the subject matter of the celebrity and organization.

Moreover, the results show that a celebrity who has no experience with the cause, is less likely to be attributed altruistic motives if s/he is a founder rather than a spokesperson. This result also suggests that if celebrities are named as founders of charities, but do not have any first-hand experience with the causes, people will have the weakest perception of the celebrities' trustworthiness and expertise. This phenomenon is explained by the fact that celebrities as founders must be expected to be already familiar with the causes that they support; thus, the celebrity founders who do not have any experience with the relevant causes may run counter to individuals' expectations of founders, which, in turn, leads to individuals' weaker perception of celebrity trustworthiness and expertise in these founders.

### 6.2 Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations of this study need to be acknowledged. First, the present study employed a convenience student sample. Considering the fact that most cases for colorectal cancer occur after the age of 50, participants who were college students were not ideal targets for sympathy concerning this particular disease. Future research needs to be conducted with a more representative sample for greater generalizability of these results.

Another major limitation of this study is that, while real health information was used, the use of a fictitious celebrity and nonprofit organization, which was intended to prevent the confounding effects of using a real celebrity and nonprofit organization, weakened the external validity of the survey. Furthermore, unlike one of the previous studies (e.g., Brown & Basil, 1995; Brown, Basil, & Bocarnea, 2003), which examined the effects of a celebrity's HIV disclosure, the present study did not assess the role of the celebrity in eliciting consumer identification with the celebrity. Thus, an alternative experimental design using a real celebrity and an organization while statistically controlling for participants' prior knowledge about them would enhance external validity and be suggested for future research.

In addition, consumer judgments of celebrities' altruistic and self-serving motives are multidimensional, but this investigation is confined to items related to health-specific situations. Although health and disease issues were chosen for the feasibility of celebrity personal experience with those causes, attributions of celebrity motives for endorsing other types of causes (e.g., environmental causes) may be viewed differently by people. Therefore, in order to strengthen the generalizability of the findings, future studies should measure celebrity motive assessments and other effects of celebrity endorsement with other, non-health related causes.

Another fruitful direction for future research may be along the lines of further examining the mediation relationship among all dependent variables for acquiring the full picture of the process through a path analysis similar to previous studies in other areas (e.g., Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000; Rifon, Choi, Trimble, & Li, 2004). In nonprofit contexts, no research on the effects of celebrity-cause congruence on consumer attitudinal and behavioral responses has been performed. Thus, it is necessary to investigate how celebrities' personal experience, as well as celebrity-cause congruence, influences all of the variables that are correlated in a casual sequence.

Furthermore, the present study did not investigate the effects of issue involvement and message appeals on overall consumer responses such as recall, attitude, and perceived risk on diseases. Previous studies conducted by Flora and Maibach's (1990) showed that consumers with low involvement remembered emotional messages better than they remembered rational messages, while highly involved consumers exhibited no appeal-related memory differences. Additionally, regardless of consumers' level of issue involvement, emotional messages more effectively stimulated in consumers a desire to learn more about a disease (Flora & Maibach, 1990). In that sense, future studies should examine the effects of sources (i.e., celebrities) along with consumer issue involvement and message appeals on consumer attitudinal and behavioral responses.

Finally, multiple celebrity endorsements for a cause should be further investigated; indeed, in the celebrity endorsement context, research has used attribution theory to suggest that multiple celebrities who endorse a product may help individuals view the product as the celebrities do, eliciting a consensus and positively influencing consumer perception of the involved celebrities and the product (Mowen & Brown, 1981; Hsu & McDonald, 2002). Indeed, this technique has been widely used for successful programs and campaigns such as the "Pink Ribbon" for breast cancer, and "Live Earth" for global warming. Moreover, note that the Entertainment Industry Foundation (EIF) launched a charitable program, *Stand Up to Cancer*, which raised awareness and funds for cancer research using numerous A-list stars through online and network television efforts. In these social and health campaigns, emotional messages and appeals by celebrities are frequently employed for fundraising. Hence, it would be an interesting topic for future researchers to investigate the effectiveness of multiple celebrity endorsements with emotional messages and appeals in the nonprofit context.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Sample Stimuli**