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Impact of Celebrity Endorsement on Attitudes Toward Voluntary Blood Donation

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ABSTRACT

The use of celebrities to promote voluntary blood donation is a recurrent practice but no study to our knowledge has addressed the subject. This study showed that he persuasives characteristics of celebrities commonly considered in the commercial field are not all adapted to the social context. Indeed, in the context of solicitation of voluntary blood donation, the study showed that the reliability and notoriety of the celebrity in addition to the feelings of the audience toward him must be the determining attributes. In addition, the results revealed that the reliability and notoriety of the celebrity are the factors that favorably influence the attitude towards voluntary blood donation.

Keywords: celebrity, voluntary, blood, donation

INTRODUCTION

The use of celebrities in advertising is a phenomenon that is current in both developed and developing countries (Shenje, 2017). Statistically, about 25% of advertisements broadcast in the United States feature celebrities (Dash & Sabat, 2012). Even stronger trends are observed in South Korea and Japan where the figures approach more than 80% (Sharma & Kumar, 2013; White & al., 2015; Brajesh & Gouranga, 2011). These statistics are symptomatic of the scale of the global endorsement strategy.

While celebrity endorsement has become an essential practice in professional circles, Bergkvist & Zhou (2016) highlight a stagnation in research on celebrity endorsement, both theoretically and methodologically. Although celebrity endorsements for social causes (disease prevention, solicitation of donations, etc.) are popular, little research has provided a theoretical explanation of the effectiveness of the phenomenon (Park & Cho, 2015). The few studies that have explored endorsement for non-profit organizations have addressed areas such as sport and physical activity promotion (Behnoosh, 2018), HIV prevention (Brown & Basil, 1995), a celebrity's experience with the endorsed cause (Park, 2017), the association between a celebrity and a non-profit organization (Salmones & Herrero, 2013), donations of money and time (Wheeler, 2009).

Despite the association of many celebrities with blood transfusion organizations (e.g. Christiano Ronaldo, Teddy Riner) with the aim of influencing the attitudes and voluntary blood donation intention of potential donors, no study to our knowledge has investigated the phenomenon of celebrity endorsements for the act of voluntary blood donation. It is to

compensate for this theoretical deficiency that we have formulated the following main question:

What is the influence of celebrity endorsements on attitudes towards voluntary blood donation?

The commercial endorsement of celebrities is operationalized in the works by the persuasive characteristics of celebrities (Hovland & al., 1951; McGuire, 1968; Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1989, 1990; Misra & Beatty, 2012). Thus, factors like celebrity credibility, attractiveness and congruence have emerged from the literature.

Paradoxically, in the use of celebrities for social causes, the same factors are usually exploited without checking their validity. This brings us to the following first specific question:

What characteristics of celebrities may influence attitudes towards voluntary blood donation?

The relationship between attitudes and behavior is one of the most important issues in consumer behavior (Beatty & Kahle, 1988) and the concept of attitude has played a crucial role in the progress of social psychology research (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). With regard to blood donation, the personal attitude is a first condition to give blood and it also acts as a first indicator of success (Boenigk & Sundermann, 2017). Thus, in order to determine the influence of the presence of celebrities to promote voluntary blood donation, we will have to answer the following second specific question:

What impact do celebrity characteristics have on attitudes toward voluntary blood donation?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Persuasive characteristics of celebrities

Endorsement templates highlighting the persuasive characteristics a celebrity should have to make an advertisement effective have been widely discussed in the literature. In the following paragraphs, a synthesis of the different recurring models in the context of the use of celebrities for promotion especially in the commercial field will be presented. It successively takes into account the credibility of the famous endorser, the attractiveness of the celebrity, the congruence, the reason for endorsement and the feelings towards the endorser.

The source credibility model

The source credibility model developed by Hovland and his collaborators in the early 1950s has its foundations in social psychology research (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Hovland, Janis & Kelly, 1974). In the most basic sense, credibility refers to the tendency to believe or trust someone.

The two important sub-attributes of endorser credibility are reliability and expertise.

Reliability

Reliability in the model refers to the honesty and integrity of a source. It is related to the trust that the audience has for the honest and objective way in which the source provides the information (Ohanian, 1991). Endorser trustworthiness simply reflects the fact that potential endorsers of a brand vary in the degree to which the public will trust what they have to say.

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Advertisers capitalize on the value of reliability by selecting endorsers who are widely regarded as honest, credible and trustworthy. Also, an endorser is more likely to be perceived as trustworthy when they match the audience in terms of characteristics such as gender and ethnicity. For example, when a spokesperson has the same affiliation as the target audience, their perceived reliability is enhanced, which promotes the adoption of more favorable attitudes towards the endorsed brand (Deshpande & Stayman, 1994).

Expertise

Expertise refers to the knowledge, experience or skills possessed by an endorser in relation to the endorsed mark (Hovlan & al., 1974). Therefore, athletes are considered experts when it comes to promoting sports-related products. Models are also perceived as having expertise Wheeler's (2009) work in the social field has shown that celebrity expertise positively influences intention to volunteer.

The source attractiveness model

The second general attribute that contributes to the effectiveness of endorsement is the attractiveness of the endorser. It goes beyond mere physical attractiveness (although this can be a very important attribute) and includes certain virtuous characteristics that consumers may perceive in an endorser: intellectual skills, personality, lifestyle, sporting prowess, etc. (Erdogan, 1999). For Wheeler (2009) the attraction of fame has a positive impact on the intention to volunteer.

Congruence between endorser and brand

The congruence between celebrity and brand has been the subject of a number of studies in the field of celebrity endorsement (Fleck, Korchai, & le Roy, 2012; Garcia de los Salmones, Dominguez & Herrero, 2013; Kahle & Homer, 1985).

Congruence, also called similarity, adequacy or relevance, has its origins in the brand extension literature, where it refers to the degree of similarity or consistency between the parent brand and the brand extension (Aaker & Keller, 1990). In the celebrity endorsement literature, congruence is seen as the similarity or consistency between the brand and the celebrity and is specific to particular endorsement situation (Amos, Holmes & Strutton, 2008; Choi & Rifon, 2012; Kirmani & Shiv, 1998).

It may seem logical that the congruence between the celebrity and the endorsed brand has a positive effect on the image of this brand: the stronger the link, the better the impact on the brand. More specifically, the more the celebrity/brand couple is perceived as suitable, relevant or even congruent, the more the response to the advertisement will be positive in terms of attitude or purchase intention (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1989 and 1990; Lynch & Schuler, 1994; Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Till & Busler, 2000; Batra & Homer, 2004).

Congruence can be, on the one hand, functional, if there is similarity between the functions of the product and the event or the social cause supported (Gwinner, 1997; Lafferty & al., 2004), or between the advertised product and fame (example of an association between an energy drink and a famous athlete). An example in the non-profit field is the case of Micheal J. Fox, a Parkinson's sufferer, who supports a Parkinson's disease charity, an example used in Wheeler's (2009) research. On the other hand, there is image congruence when both parties to the alliance

share the same core value(s). This type of compatibility is more symbolic (Bigné & al., 2009) and represents the consumer's perception that congruence is acceptable for reasons different from the link with the characteristics of the product, in addition to ignoring any trigger for functional incompatibility (Trimble & Rifon, 2006).

Of these two types, the latter is the most determining (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999 ; Lafferty & al., 2004) and, in fact, it is recommended that the advertising agency or company first determines the symbolic values of the product, then chooses a celebrity who represents these relevant symbolic properties (Byrne & al., 2003). In the social sector, image congruence is more important because it is common nowadays for celebrities to support a cause, regardless of their functional fit (Salmones, Dominguez & Herrero, 2013).

The reason for celebrity endorsement

A potentially important factor in celebrity endorsement is consumers' attribution of the reasons for the celebrity endorsement. According to attribution theory, people tend to perceive the causes of others' actions, and these perceptions influence behavior, affect, and expectation (Kelly & Michela, 1980). Thus, if a celebrity is attributed with predominantly negative motives for their brand endorsement, this is likely to have a negative effect on brand valuation. For example, if the celebrity is perceived to be primarily driven by financial incentives, as opposed to actual use and/or product appreciation, this can have a negative effect on brand ratings. The celebrity's motive for endorsing a brand as possible determinant of attitude toward the brand has received little attention from researchers, and there does not appear to be any quantitative study of this factor. However, qualitative results from Tripp, Jensen & Carlson (1994) suggest that consumer perceptions that celebrities are primarily motivated by money negatively affect brand valuation. Similarly, Moore, Mowen & Reardon (1994) find a negative effect of unknown paid endorsers (as opposed to unpaid endorsers) on brand attitude. In addition, sponsorship research has demonstrated the importance of motive attribution. These studies show that the attribution of positive motives (eg, making a contribution to society) has a positive effect on brand valuation and attribution of negative motives (eg, the only motive is money) has a negative effect on brand valuation (Ruth & Simonin, 2006; Speed & Thompson, 2000).

Feelings about celebrity

Feelings toward celebrity is an important factor also labeled as attitude toward celebrity, celebrity affection, or celebrity affect (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016). There are surprisingly few studies that have included feelings toward celebrities as an independent variable in celebrity endorsement research. One likely reason for this limited interest is that it is assumed that celebrities are chosen because they are well-liked and few brands would choose a less-liked celebrity as their endorser. However, in a field related to endorsement, notably sponsorship, affective reactions towards the sponsored entity have been sufficiently documented (Escoubes, 2015; Bal, 2010). Moreover, in the few existing studies, research results in terms of effects on brand ratings are mixed: some studies have found a positive effect of celebrity appreciation on brand ratings (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Misra & Beatty, 2012), some studies found no effect (Fleck, Korchia & Le Roy, 2012; Miller & Allen, 2012) and even one study found a negative effect (Rossiter & Smidts, 2012). Thus, for Bergkvist & Zhou (2016), the role of feelings towards celebrities in advertising persuasion is far from being elucidated.

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In both the profit and non-profit sectors, celebrities are powerful transmitters of feelings and exert strong influence on consumers through peripheral channels. Celebrities aren't used to being experts on social causes because their core business isn't usually related to those causes, but they can be believable and very persuasive. More specifically, their power of persuasion stems from their image, the attitudes and feelings that people have towards them. The more people like them, the more they perceive them as being in line with the social cause and the more effective the advertising communication will be (Salmones, Dominguez & Herrero, 2013). Our literature review has highlighted six determining characteristics to be taken into account when choosing a celebrity endorser to promote a brand or a product. These are the celebrity's expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, congruence with the brand (or product), motive for endorsement, and the audience's feelings about the celebrity. These attributes are primarily derived from the commercial literature and are therefore not designed for the social domain.

METHODOLOGY

In order to test the validity of the characteristics expressing endorsement in the context of voluntary blood donation, two group interviews were conducted with undergraduate students. The interview guide used to conduct the collections is presented in *Appendix 1*.

For the advertising stimulus, a digital advertising poster of football celebrity Christiano Ronaldo with a blood bag in hand was designed and presented to the target on a giant screen. The image is accompanied by a message inviting people to donate blood voluntarily, which reads "*let's give blood*"

The final collection phase took place within two months (August-September 2020) on the campus of University of Lomé. Three digital posters were designed, each with the image of a celebrity after a selection test (*Appendix 2*). The posters follow the same criteria as the one used for the group interviews. In the absence of a database of respondents and in order to save time, we opted for a convenience sampling method. The choice of university allows us to reach many young people because they are the main target of blood collection organizations (Zhou & Yu, 2012). Finally, we collected our data from 622 individuals after invalidating 28 incorrectly completed questionnaires.

Two hypotheses were formulated based on the literature:

H1: the persuasive characteristics of celebrities are identical in both the commercial and voluntary blood donation contexts

H2: Persuasive characteristics of celebrities positively influence attitudes toward voluntary blood donation

The data collected during the group interviews were subjected to a thematic content analysis. Thematic content analysis is considered a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communications with the aim of interpreting them (Aktouf, 1987).

An exploratory factor analysis is conducted on the final sample data. The purpose of this analysis is to verify the factor structure of the celebrity characteristics revealed by the content analysis.

To study the influence of celebrity characteristics on attitudes toward voluntary blood donation, we opted for structural equation models, which offer the advantage of simultaneously testing the existence of causal relationships between several latent explanatory variables and several latent explained variables (Roussel & al., 2002).

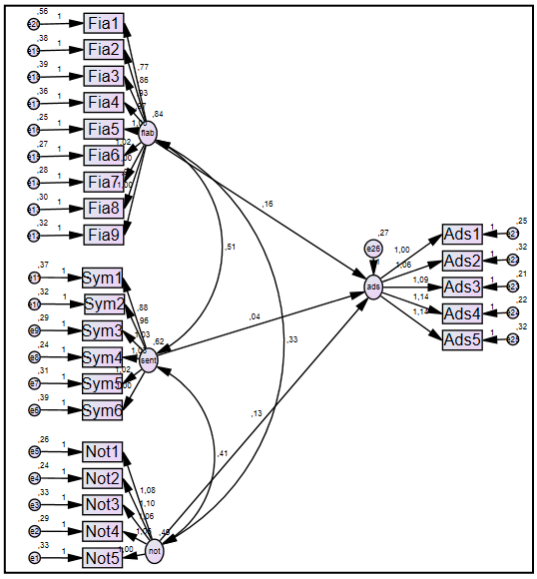
RESULTS

The results of the qualitative study conducted through content analysis show that certain characteristics of celebrities that are essential in the commercial domain are not relevant to the social context. Indeed; *expertise, reliability, attractiveness, congruence* and *motive for endorsement* are not relevant attributes to encourage the act of voluntary blood donation. In addition, the qualitative study allowed for the emergence of a new concept that we entitled *perceived awareness* in addition to *feelings* and trustworthiness from the literature. At the end of the qualitative study, the list of persuasive characteristics and the related items are presented in the appendix (3 & 4).

The exploratory analysis validates the 3 persuasive characteristics of the celebrities identified through the qualitative study with good representations of the items on the three factorial axes having their eigenvalue higher than 1 (representation quality varying between 0,560 and 0,795). In terms of reliability, the revealed characteristics present good indicators for all three dimensions (Cronbach's alpha between 0,906 and 0,951) (*appendix 5*) thus revealing their very good psychometric qualities. These results show that the persuasive characteristics of celebrities in the commercial context are different from those revealed in the context of soliciting voluntary blood donations. Indeed, of the characteristics identified in the commercial literature on celebrity endorsement, only 2 are maintained and one emerge from our qualitative study.

Hypothesis H1 is therefore partially validated

We tested Hypothesis H2 by modeling in AMOS a direct and linear influence of the persuasive characteristics of revealed celebrities (*feelings, trustworthiness and perceived fame*) on attitudes toward blood donation. The structural model is presented in the following figure.



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Before using this model in the validation of hypothesis H2, we proceeded to an analysis of the different fit indicators (Appendix 6).

The results reported in Appendix 6 show that, with the exception of the GFI and AGFI indices which are slightly below the threshold of 0,9 recommended by the literature, the other indicators respect the reference limit values defined previously. We can affirm that the structural model has an acceptable quality of fit. It can therefore be used in the validation of the research hypothesis H2.

Decision rule: the standardized regression coefficient β>0 and significant	
Fiab ⟶ Ads	β=0,037 p=0,541
Sent ⟶ Ads	β=0,161 p<0,001
Not ⟶ Ads	β=0,127 p<0,05

As shown in the previous table, the collected data show that the *reliability* (β=0,161 p<0,001) and *perceived fame* (β=0,127 p<0,05) of the celebrity favorably influence the attitude toward blood donation because it meets the previously specified validation criteria (positive standardized coefficient and p probability less than 0,05). On the other hand, the positive influence that *feelings about celebrity* would have on the attitude towards voluntary blood donation is not confirmed (β=0,037 p=0,541).

The data at our disposal lead us to partially validate hypothesis H2

These results show that the characteristics a celebrity should possess to influence voluntary blood donation are *trustworthiness*, positive audience *feelings*, and increased *notoriety*. They illustrate that the characteristics traditionally emphasized in commercial celebrity endorsement do not fit the social context. Indeed, if *trustworthiness* and feelings are maintained in the social context of voluntary blood donation, certain characteristics recurrent in the endorsement literature, notably *attractiveness, expertise*, and *congruence*, are not determinant. The emergence through this study of fame as a persuasive characteristic teaches us that the more a celebrity is kwon, the more favorably he or she will influence the act of voluntary blood donation.

As mentioned above, attitude is the major determinant of individual behavior. The results showed that the celebrity's *trustworthiness* and *fame* positively influence the attitude towards voluntary blood donation. This implies that when choosing among several celebrities to endorse voluntary blood donation, the choice should be made for the one with higher *reliability* and *fame*. Indeed, it is the celebrity who is best known and perceived as trustworthy who should be chosen.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article is to assess the impact of celebrity endorsement on attitudes toward voluntary blood donation.

To achieve this objective, a group interview followed by a quantitative study is conducted. The results showed that trustworthiness, awareness, and audience feelings are the major attributes that celebrities must possess in the context of celebrity endorsement for the promotion of voluntary blood donation.

Structural equation modeling also highlighted the fact that influencing people to have a favorable attitude toward voluntary blood donation requires focusing on celebrities who are perceived as trustworthy and who are well known.

We can therefore affirm at the end of this study that in order to choose a celebrity to support an organization in charge of promoting voluntary blood donation, the celebrity must inspire the confidence of his audience. In addition, the celebrity must be well known by the target audience. Nevertheless, there are a few limitations to this study that we must highlight. The first one concerns the type of sample. Indeed, we opted for sample of convenience, thus limiting the generalization potential of the study.

As second limitation to our research, we can mention the type of media used in our experimental protocol. It should be noted that we have focused our study on digital posters while other means of communication exist, such as radio adverts, audiovisual and press adverts. The last methodological limitation identified in this research concerns the experimental field approach.

The orientation of our data collection towards an experimental field approach allowed us to move away from the classic laboratory experimentation approach. While this approach offers an opportunity for external validity through the larger sample size, it also presents a limitation in terms of biases that can affect the internal validity of the results.

The aforementioned limitations open up research opportunities to improve the generalization potential of this study.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Interview Guide for the qualitative study

As part our doctoral study, we would like to conduct an interview with you. The purpose of this study is to determine the factors influencing the effectiveness of advertising communication actions using celebrities. Particular emphasis has been placed on the use of celebrities to raise awareness about social causes, including voluntary blood donation. You will be exposed to an advertising poster featuring a celebrity. We would like to have your opinion on this advertising poster, particularly the elements of this advertisement that could lead you to make voluntary blood donation.

Topics to be addressed	Additional questions	Clarification questions
What meanings does voluntary donation (money, blood, personal item) have for you? Why do you make the voluntary donation (money, gift, personal object…)?	What would lead you to voluntary donate blood? For some people, blood donation is an opportunity to be useful to society. What do you think of this statement? For others, donating blood as a volunteer is never selfless; you always get something in return. What is your opinion on this statement?	
What qualities do you think are important for a celebrity to have that would lead you to follow their recommendations to donate blood?	- How do you personally feel about celebrity? - The reason for association? - The celebrity's knowledge of blood donation (or blood)? - Can the honesty of the famous person be a determining factor ? - Can the attractiveness of the celebrity in the advert be important in following their recommendations? - Do you consider the proximity between the celebrity's field of activity and blood donation?	

Appendix 2: Digital poster of Emmanuel Adebayor



Appendix 3: generated items

	Items	Authors
Reliability		
Fia1	This person has good morals/ This person has bad morals	Qualitative study (2020)
Fia2	This person is a humanist/This person is not a humanist	Qualitative study (2020)
Fia3	This person is a role model/ This person is not a role model	Qualitative study (2020)
Fia4	This person is consistent/ This person is not consitent	Qualitative study (2020)
Fia5	This person is very reliable/ This person is not reliable	Ohanian (1990)
Fia6	This person is very honest/ This person is not honest at all	Ohanian (1990)
Fia7	This person is very trustworthy/ This person is not trustworthy at all	Ohanian (1990)
Fia8	This person is very sincere/ This person is not sincere at all	Ohanian (1990)
Fia9	This person is very loyal/ This person is not loyal at all	Ohanian (1990)

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Annexe 4: Generated items (contitued)

Feelings		
Sym1	I appreciate this person/ I don't appreciate this person	Qualitative study (2020)
Sym2	I like this person/ I don't like this person	Qualitative study (2020)
Sym3	This person is my idol/This person is not my idol	Qualitative study (2020)
Sym4	I am a fan of this person/I am not a fan of this person	Qualitative study (2020)
Sym5	I support this person/ I don't support this person	Qualitative study (2020)
Sym6	This person is very pleasant/this person is not very pleasant	Tripp & al. (1994) ; Wheeler (2009)
Sym7	This person is very nice/ This person is not nice	Tripp & al. (1994) ; Wheeler (2009)
Perceived fame		
Not1	This person is famous/This person is not famous	Qualitative study (2020)
Not2	This person is recognized/This person is not recongnized	Qualitative study (2020)
Not3	This individual is a great personality/This individual is not a great personality	Qualitative study (2020)
Not4	This person is a star/This person is not a star	Qualitative study (2020)
Not5	This individual has a strong reputation/ This individual does not have a strong reputation	Qualitative study (2020)

Appendix 5: Results of the exploratory studies

Exploratory factor analysis (n=622) ; KMO= 0,956				
Items	**F1**	**F2**	**F3**	**Qualité rep.**
Fiab1	0,528			0,560
Fiab2	0,678			0,677
Fiab3	0,775			0,703
Fiab4	0,860			0,739
Fiab5	0,870			0,789
Fiab6	0,925			0,795
Fiab7	0,917			0,781
Fiab8	0,902			0,760
Fiab9				0,758
Sym1			-0,814	0,644
Sym2			-0,857	0,714
Sym3			-0,845	0,743
Sym4			-0,857	0,767
Sym5			-0,841	0,730
Sym6			-0,738	0,664
Not1		0,814		0,738
Not2		0,828		0,747
Not3		0,868		0,725
Not4		0,851		0,731
Not5		0,823		0,708
Expl. var/R	54,078%	12,496%	5,785%	
Expl var	72,359%			
	Reliability			
α de Cronbach	0,951	0,918	0,906	

Appendix 6: Structural Equation Model Goodness of Fit

Indicators	**GFI**	**AGFI**	**RMSEA**	**SRMR**	**CFI**	**NNFI**	**Normalized Chi-square**
Valeurs	0,874	0,848	0,066	0,042	0,939	0,919	3,731

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