Journal of Business Research 164 (2023) 113951



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Business Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jbusres



When is celebrity endorsement effective? Exploring the role of celebrity endorsers in enhancing key brand associations

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Brand endorsement
Celebrity endorser
Elevation
Enriching benefits
Brand evaluation

ABSTRACT

This study examines how a celebrity endorser's key associations can complement and help improve a brand's low corresponding associations. By conducting three studies, we find that when consumers have no prior knowledge about the benefits of a brand, a celebrity's enabling, enticing, and enriching (3E) associations get transferred to the brand. However, when consumers know that a brand has low 3E benefits, only the celebrity endorsers' enriching associations are transferred to the brand. Thus, from the current study the importance of a celebrity's enriching benefits is emphasized for both unknown and well-known brands. Furthermore, we theorize and demonstrate consumer elevation as the underlying mechanism whereby the enriching benefits of a celebrity endorser are transferred to a brand. The current findings extend the extant literature on celebrity endorsement management and provide valuable managerial insights for developing effective celebrity endorsement strategies.

1. Introduction

Celebrity endorsement marketing has been on the rise globally, and numerous firms devote multi-million budgets to celebrity endorsement annually to leverage brand association by collaborating with celebrities who are well-known or possess a desirable positive image (Aw & Labrecque 2020; Yu & Hu 2020). For example, as a global fast-food chain, McDonald's launched the 'BTS Meal' (BTS is a South Korean boy band) across six continents and 50 countries worldwide in mid-2021. McDonald's is estimated to have paid BTS over USD$ 8 million and even abandoned its signature color, red, and replaced it with purple, the color of BTS. The outcome of the campaign was remarkable and helped boost sales worldwide and resulted in an "earning surprise." However, not all endorsement campaigns are as successful, and important questions remain about what type of celebrity associations, if any, get transferred to a brand effectively.

Given the prevalence of promotions featuring celebrities and their endorsements, research on celebrity endorsement has been an important topic in marketing communication strategy (Schimmelpfennig & Hunt 2020). And since celebrities as brand endorsers have been noted as a key secondary source of associations for a brand (McCormick 2016; Ilicic & Webster, 2013), academic researchers have scrutinized the effectiveness of various endorsement strategies. For instance, it has been noted that celebrity associations may help increase brand awareness among consumers (Aw & Labrecque, 2020; Buttle et al., 2000; Miller & Allen, 2012; Zamudio, 2016) and change brand credibility and attitudes (Amos et al., 2008; Chung & Cho, 2017; Knoll & Matthes, 2017; Liu & Liu, 2019).

Extant work on celebrity endorsement's effect on consumer response and evaluation, however, has mainly focused on the commonality perspective of leveraging associations, emphasizing the importance of fit and congruency between a brand's image and its celebrity endorsers' image (Albert et al., 2017; Pradhan et al., 2016, Rice et al., 2012; Kamins, 1990; Till & Busler, 2000; Zhu et al., 2019). Critical questions remain about the effectiveness of potential complementarity strategies, which suggest that less congruent knowledge about the entity (celebrity) may also have either a direct or an indirect effect on the target (endorsed) brand (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020).

Although complementarity strategies can be strategically critical in delivering the desired image for a brand, current knowledge about its effectiveness and possibilities remains limited (Chang & Ko, 2016; Lee & Thorson, 2008; Zamudio, 2016). This study aims to fill this critical gap in the existing literature. More specifically, we examine how a celebrity endorser's key association can complement and help improve a brand's weak corresponding association. The current findings show that when

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.113951
Received 25 August 2021; Received in revised form 2 April 2023; Accepted 11 April 2023
Available online 28 April 2023
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the focal brand and its benefits are known to consumers, a celebrity endorser's enabling, enticing, and enriching benefits may all be transferred to the brand. In contrast, when the focal brand is not known to consumers, only the enriching benefit of an endorser is transferred to the brand. Thus, the current results emphasize the critical role of a celebrity endorser's enriching benefits for both known and unknown brands in complementary celebrity endorsement. We further explore the key role of the celebrity endorser's enriching benefits in helping a brand by examining consumer elevation as the underlying mechanism through which such benefits are transferred to an endorsed brand.

The next sections discuss the theoretical background, develop a set of formal hypotheses, and present three studies to test the proposed hypotheses. Finally, we explore the theoretical and managerial implications of the findings and key avenues for future research.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Celebrity endorsement: commonality vs. complementarity

Celebrity endorsement has been noted as one of the most prevalent strategies for leveraging secondary brand associations and prior work suggests that leveraging the associations of other entities allows for two types of strategies: commonality and complementarity strategies (Keller & Swaminathan 2020). The former has been noted as an effective strategy for strengthening existing key brand associations (Dimofte & Yalch, 2011; Keller, 2003). In contrast, the latter aims to develop novel desired brand associations by leveraging the associations of the other entity. Hence, it focuses on building new rather than strengthening existing brand associations.

Previous studies on celebrity endorsement have mainly focused on the commonality strategy, which emphasizes the importance of fit and similarity in customer associations between a brand and its celebrity endorsers (Albert et al., 2017; Pradhan et al., 2016, Rice et al., 2012; Kamins, 1990; Till & Busler, 2000; Zhu et al., 2019). Moreover, the importance of fit between the associations of a brand and those of an endorser (Albert et al., 2017; Choi & Rifon, 2012; Esclas & Bettman, 2017; Zhu et al., 2019) has been studied in various contexts such as varying customer involvement, product category, cause-related marketing, consumer-brand congruency, and celebrity-consumer congruency (Arsena et al., 2014; Boon & Lomore, 2001; Choi & Rifon, 2012; McCracken, 1989; Wright, 2016). However, based on the proposed complementarity leveraging strategy, weak or no congruent associations between the brand and the celebrity endorser may also provide strategical effects in delivering the desired brand association. To date, the complementary celebrity endorsement strategy is still an underexplored area. Therefore, by drawing on the 3Es brand benefit theory, in this study we aim to explore the potential of complementarity leveraging strategies, and more specifically, to examine the extent to which brands with certain weak benefits (e.g., weak enabling, enticing, and enriching) can be complemented by the celebrity endorser's strong corresponding (e.g., strong enabling, enticing, enriching) associations to change consumer perceptions.

2.2. Benefits of brands and celebrities based on the 3Es theory

According to prior studies, brand benefits can be classified into three types: enabling, enticing, and enriching benefits (3Es in short) (Park et al., 2016). The 3E benefits are relevant to one or more classes of human needs that underlie key typologies of human motivations, needs, values, and goals. As Krishna (2012) highlighted, brands with enticing benefits offer various sensory and cognitive stimulations that activate customers' thoughts and senses to please them. Brands please the senses when they provide stimulation by arousing the imagination or curiosity. Moreover, they may offer sensory stimulation by activating pleasant experiences, including sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and tactile sensations (Biswas et al., 2014; Brakus et al., 2009; Eisingerich et al., 2019; Yoon & Park, 2012).

Further, the enabling benefits of a brand are important to consumers as they strengthen consumers' trust in the brand and brand attachment (Park et al., 2013, 2016). Brands' enabling benefits can empower customers and give them a stronger sense of control over their environment by helping them solve small or large problems. Brands may also empower customers by helping them conserve their scarce resources, including time, monetary, psychological, and physical resources (Bell et al., 2017; Eisingerich & Bell, 2008; Lin et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2015; Merlo et al., 2018; Park et al., 2013; Sun et al., 2021). Finally, prior work notes two ways brands can provide enriching benefits: reflecting personal beliefs and hopes and symbolizing one's status and relationships (Berger & Heath, 2009; Foscht et al., 2018; Gill-Simmen et al., 2018; Park et al., 2016; Shavitt et al., 2009). Customers may feel inspired when the brands they purchase and consume daily have values or principles that align with their personal or professional worldview on what is moral, good, just, and right. Brands may also offer enriching benefits to customers by allowing them to signal their values to others (Coleman & Williams 2015). Whereas the lack of enriching benefits may not be a source of major disappointment, their presence might delight consumers, making their impact stronger (Park et al., 2016).

Hence, celebrity endorsers who have established their personal brand image may also possess and provide these 3E benefits. As celebrities can provide enticing benefits through their good looks, voices, and humor, brands often partner with celebrities, hoping that their glamour or pleasing charm is transferred to the brand (Dwivedi et al., 2015). Celebrities also offer enabling benefits that empower consumers. Consumers may trust an endorser because of their enabling benefits, such as expertise and skills in certain product categories, or because they reflect an active lifestyle (Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016; Dwivedi et al., 2015; Knoll & Matthes, 2017; Park et al., 2010, 2016). When doctors and dentists promote toothpaste or toothbrushes, consumers trust them for their perceived expertise in dentistry (Guido et al., 2011; Tripp et al., 1994). Celebrities are considered to embody personality and lifestyle-related meanings (McCracken, 1989). Consumers value the symbolic meanings associated with celebrities and use these meanings, in part, to craft an individual sense of self (Dwivedi et al., 2015; McCracken, 1989).

We posit that the 3E benefits of celebrity endorsers may transfer to and complement the weak corresponding 3E benefits of endorsed brands depending on the level of consumer knowledge about the endorsed brands. The next section develops a set of formal hypotheses on the transfer of a celebrity endorser's 3E benefits to unknown and well-known endorsed brands.

3. Hypotheses development

3.1. Transfer of celebrity endorsers' benefits to unknown endorsed brands

The meaning transfer model (McCracken, 1989) suggests that certain celebrities are characterized by cultural meanings that are transferred when they enter an endorsement relationship, such as advertising a product or service. Thus, such cultural meanings that celebrities are endowed with become the cultural meanings of the endorsed product. Accordingly, this study builds on the meaning transfer model. McCracken (1989) describes many celebrity meanings, including status, class, gender, age, personality, and lifestyle. More recently, Miller and Allen (2012) elaborated on the model by applying an evaluative conditioning framework as the cognitive underlying mechanism.

According to De Houwer (2007, p. 230), evaluative conditioning is "an effect, that is, a change in the valence of a stimulus that results from pairing the stimulus with another stimulus." This evaluative conditioning in celebrity endorsement likely occurs with unknown brands rather than well-known brands (Cacioppo et al., 1992; Gibson, 2008; Miller & Allen, 2012) because a rich network of memory associations characterizes well-known brands. Thus, attitudes toward well-known brands are more challenging to change using evaluative conditioning

procedures, including celebrity endorsement. In contrast, consumers are likely to perceive the celebrity endorser's benefits as the endorsed brand's benefits through evaluative conditioning procedures when they do not already have a certain perception of the endorsed brand.

Previous studies support this view. Consumers with limited brand knowledge tend to have fewer existing associations with the brand (Czellar & Luna, 2010), which makes them seek additional information to build new associations (Chang & Ko, 2016). In the process, consumers tend to be more influenced by information that is effortlessly accessible (Petty et al., 2007). For instance, consumers are likely to build associations with the unknown endorsed brand by using information they have about the celebrity endorser. Hence, consumers' attitudes toward unknown endorsed brands, compared to well-known endorsed brands, are more likely to change through celebrity endorsement. Based on the above, we predict that an endorser's benefits can help build the corresponding benefits of the endorsed brands when consumers have no information about the endorsed brands' benefits. Formally, we hypothesize that endorsers' enabling, enticing, and enriching benefits transfer to brands with benefits unknown by consumers:

H1a: A brand with benefits unknown to consumers will be perceived as having higher enabling benefits when a celebrity endorser has strong enabling benefits.
H1b: A brand with benefits unknown to consumers will be perceived as having higher enticing benefits when a celebrity endorser has strong enticing benefits.
H1c: A brand with benefits unknown to consumers will be perceived as having higher enriching benefits when a celebrity endorser has strong enriching benefits.

3.2. Transfer of celebrity endorsers' benefits to well-known endorsed brands

While we expect that a celebrity endorser's 3E benefits are all transferred in the case of endorsed brands with benefits unknown to consumers, we propose that different outcomes likely occur for endorsed brands with benefits well-known to consumers. According to prior studies, enriching benefits are non-product-related, whereas enabling and enticing benefits are often perceived by consumers as product-related (Keller, 1993; Park et al., 2016). As product-related attributes are "the ingredients necessary for performing the product or service function sought by consumers" (Keller, 1993, p. 4), customers may experience such benefits from the product attributes (Ford & Nichols, 1987). Enabling benefits empower customers by helping them conserve their scarce resources (Park et al., 2016). Since the benefit is an attribute related to the expertise in solving consumers' problems, consumers may perceive the benefit through the product's actual usage. This indicates that the enabling benefits correspond to the actual function of the product itself. Likewise, enticing benefits satisfy sensory pleasure and provide cognitive stimulation from using a product or service (Keller, 1993). Because sensory pleasure such as visual, auditory, olfactory, taste, and tactile is perceived through the inherent attribute of a product or service, the enticing benefits also correspond to the actual feature of the product itself. As consumers may feel the enabling and enticing benefits from the product itself because they are intrinsic by nature, enabling and enticing benefits are unlikely to be experienced simply by leveraging other secondary sources, such as celebrity endorsement, when consumers know the product is lacking in those benefits.

By contrast, non-product-related attributes are "external aspects of the product or service that relate to its purchase or consumption" (Keller, 1993, p. 3). Thus, enriching benefits of brands are extrinsic by nature, unlike enabling and enticing benefits, as enriching benefits are not necessarily experienced with the product attributes. Enriching benefits, which are non-product-related, may be delivered by leveraging secondary sources even though consumers know the product lacks those benefits. Supporting this view, Escalas and Bettman (2009) empirically demonstrate that celebrity endorsement of brands is a source of symbolic brand meaning, which provides symbolic and inspiring benefits to consumers.

Cognitive dissonance theory (CDT) supports this argument. Specifically, CDT suggests that individuals feel a psychologically unpleasant state called cognitive dissonance when they experience two or more contradicting cognitions. Thus, they tend to resolve the discomfort by altering their cognitions (Festinger 1957). Individuals may choose their attitudes, behaviors, or beliefs by altering cognitions to reduce cognitive discrepancy, which helps restore cognitive consistency (Chang & Ko, 2016; Hinojosa et al., 2017; Jeong et al., 2019). In the process of discrepancy reduction, CDT predicts that individuals alter the cognitions that are the least resistant to change (Festinger, 1957). Enabling and enticing benefits are intrinsic product-related benefits that need to be experienced with the attributes of the brand offering. Hence, based on CDT, we expect that consumers likely reject new cognitions from a celebrity endorser with strong enabling or enticing benefits when they know the endorsed brand lacks in those benefits because their existing cognitions are resistant to change. In contrast, enriching benefits are extrinsic non-product-related benefits that are not relevant to the attributes of the brand's offerings. Hence, we expect that a celebrity endorser's well-known strong enriching benefits get transferred to the brand even when consumers know the endorsed brand lacks enriching benefits. Formally, we posit that:

H2a: A brand with known low enabling benefits will *not* be perceived as having higher enabling benefits even though a celebrity endorser has strong enabling benefits.
H2b: A brand with known low enticing benefits will *not* be perceived as having higher enticing benefits even though a celebrity endorser has strong enticing benefits.
H2c: A brand with known low enriching benefits will be perceived as having higher enriching benefits when a celebrity endorser has strong enriching benefits.

3.3. The mediating role of elevation in the transfer of enriching benefits

Elevation, also known as moral elevation, is a distinct positive emotion experienced when an individual witnesses another person engaging in a virtuous act, particularly one that enhances the welfare of others (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Haidt, 2003a, 2003b; Keltner & Haidt, 2003; Thomson & Siegel, 2017). Prior research has noted elevation as a discrete emotion, separate from a general positive mood (Haidt, 2003a; Schnall et al., 2010). The cognitive appraisal theory of emotions posits that discrete emotions arise from the evaluation and interpretation of events, rather than the events themselves. The theory identifies various types of discrete emotions (Arnold, 1960; Lazarus, 1968; Roseman et al., 1990; Watson & Spence, 2007), but elevation is not fully studies in this regard. Extant emotion literature posits that emotions initiate a series of responses, including physiological and behavioral changes (Lerner & Keltner, 2000; Levenson, 1994). Furthermore, emotions exert a direct motivational influence, potentially altering goal prioritization (Schwarz & Clore, 2007). In accord with this, studies have demonstrated that elevation fosters a desire to improve oneself (Haidt, 2000; Aquino et al., 2011) and collaborate with others (Algoe & Haidt, 2009), as well as promotes prosocial behaviors (Schnall et al., 2010; Schnall & Roper, 2012). To further substantiate elevation as a discrete emotion, previous research has explored its physiological consequences. Piper et al. (2015) reported that elevating experiences increased heart rate and respiratory sinus arrhythmia, while Silvers and Haidt (2008) found that elevation in mothers correlated with elevated oxytocin levels and lactation.

According to Algoe and Haidt (2009), elevation is one of the other-praising emotions, which also includes admiration as it is elicited from witnessing others' exemplary actions. Although elevation and admiration are part of the other-praising family of emotions, they may motivate people differently. It is because elevation is an emotional response to

moral excellence whereas admiration is an emotional response to non-moral excellence such as extraordinary skills, talent, or achievements. As a result, elevation motivates people to be kind to and caring about others while admiration motivates people to work hard toward success (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Haidt, 2000, 2003a). As elevation is an emotional response to moral excellence, we do not expect consumers to feel elevated by celebrities with strong enabling or enticing but weak enriching benefits. Enabling benefits may stem from expertise and skill of the celebrities and enticing benefits may stem from physical appearance, beautiful voices, charm, with and humor of the celebrities that are not related to moral excellence. In addition, the feeling of elevation also fits well with the broaden-and-build model of positive emotion (Fredrickson, 2000; Haidt, 2000). As celebrity endorsers with enriching benefits induce elevating experiences of consumers, their momentary thought-action repertoires broaden to feel the same enriching benefits from the endorsed brands. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: The feeling of elevation from an endorser's enriching benefits mediates the transfer of an endorser's enriching benefits to the endorsed brand.

4. Overview of studies

We conducted three studies to test our proposed hypotheses. Study 1 examined how the 3E benefits of celebrity endorsers complement and help build the corresponding 3E benefits of an endorsed brand when the brand benefits are unknown to consumers. Study 2 examined the same complementary effects of celebrity endorsers' 3E benefits when the brand benefits are known to consumers. Study 3 shows the generalizability of Studies 1 and 2 by confirming the results with a different focal brand, different endorsers and participation samples from a country with a different cultural background. Further, we tested the mediation role of the feeling of elevation in the transfer process with Study 3.

4.1. Study 1: Transfer of endorsers' 3E benefits to unknown brands

4.1.1. Method

Study 1 examines to what extent an endorser's benefits can be transferred to a brand that consumers do not know its benefits (H1). First, we conducted 26 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants of a university course to identify three types of celebrity endorsers who are solely strong in one of the 3E's: (1) a celebrity with high enabling (and low enticing and enriching) benefits, (2) a celebrity with high enticing (and low enabling and enriching) benefits, and (3) a celebrity with high enriching (and low enticing and enabling) benefits, respectively. Interviews lasted, on average, 35 min. Each participant received USD 25 as a token of gratitude, was debriefed, and did not further participate in the study. Further, to set an unknown brand condition, we created a fictitious new coffee machine brand called "Mardi," which was used as the brand stimulus because the product category has reasonably high consumer involvement and is not gender- or age-specific (a pre-test (N = 89) showed that consumers of varying age and gender were equally interested in coffee makers).

4.1.2. Pre-test

Selecting celebrity endorsers. Three pre-tests ($N = 30$, $N = 31$, and $N = 31$) were conducted to select three celebrities high in one (and low in the other two) of the three key benefits. Accordingly, we got Ben Stiller for the celebrity with a high enticing benefit ($M_{enabling} = 2.89$, $M_{enticing} = 7.53$, and $M_{enriching} = 3.17$, $p < .05$); Lucy Liu, with a high enabling benefit ($M_{enabling} = 7.42$, $M_{enticing} = 3.54$, and $M_{enriching} = 3.50$, $p < .05$); and Whoopi Goldberg, with a high enriching benefit ($M_{enabling} = 3.26$, $M_{enticing} = 3.47$, and $M_{enriching} = 7.72$, $p < .05$).

4.1.3. Main test

Respondents and procedures. As part of a regular course requirement at their University, 380 students (female 57 %) participated in Study 1. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: the experimental conditions with Lucy Liu, Ben Stiller, and Whoopi Goldberg, and the control condition with no endorser. Since we aimed to examine a brand with benefits unknown to consumers, we did not provide specific information about the focal brand except for the name "Mardi." Specifically, we created a one-page magazine commentary purportedly in the "New Tech" section, which introduced the fictitious espresso coffee machine brand "Mardi," without any information about the 3E benefits from the brand. Study 1 was conducted across two time periods; at Time 1 (stimulus without any celebrity endorsers) and Time 2 (stimuli with the three types of celebrity endorsers and no endorser) to ascertain whether the celebrity endorsers' benefits transfer to the brand' Mardi.' We employed a two-time within-subject design to examine the changes in respondents' perception toward 3E benefits before and after exposure to a celebrity endorser. Accordingly, at Time 1, respondents were only exposed to the brand category and brand name "Mardi." Specifically, the participants were asked to see the one-page magazine advertisement introducing Mardi and answer questions about the enabling ($\alpha = 0.81$), enticing ($\alpha = 0.85$), and enriching ($\alpha = 0.80$) benefits of Mardi, adapting the published brand enabling, enticing and enriching measures from Park et al. (2013, 2016) and using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Although we did not provide any information on the benefits of "Mardi," measuring the levels of these benefits is essential to compare them at Times 1 and 2. Table 1 reports detailed measurement items.

One week later, at Time 2, we invited the same participants to answer the same questions when the Mardi brand was matched with one of the three celebrity endorsers selected from the pre-test. After seeing the magazine advertisement with one celebrity endorser, participants were asked to answer questions on the enabling benefit ($\alpha = 0.91$), enticing benefit ($\alpha = 0.86$), and enriching benefit ($\alpha = 0.91$) of the brand "Mardi" as well as the enabling benefit ($\alpha = 0.96$), enticing benefit ($\alpha = 0.80$), and enriching benefit ($\alpha = 0.94$) of the celebrity endorsers adapting items from Park et al.'s (2013, 2016) measures. As part of our controls, we measured attitude toward endorser ($\alpha = 0.89$), coffee machine relevance ($r = 0.72$), fit between brand and endorser ($\alpha = 0.87$) from Till & Busler (2000) and endorsement believability ($r = 0.82$) on seven-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

4.1.4. Results

Manipulation checks and potential confounds. In all four brand conditions, since no product benefit information was presented, the perceived levels of the product's functional, experiential, and symbolic benefits are the same, and the levels of each benefit are low (low enabling benefit condition, $M_{enabling} = 2.72$, $M_{enticing} = 7.74$, and $M_{enriching} = 7.60$, $p < .05$; low enticing benefit condition, $M_{enabling} = 7.40$, $M_{enticing} = 2.88$, and $M_{enriching} = 7.63$, $p < .05$; low enriching benefit condition, $M_{enabling} = 7.60$, $M_{enticing} = 7.51$, and $M_{enriching} = 2.94$, $p < .05$).

Regarding the endorser conditions, since we pre-tested the celebrity seen as having high levels of only one of the 3E benefits, respondents should perceive that the benefit we manipulate is higher than the other benefits. As expected, the results reveal that Whoopi Goldberg was regarded as higher in enriching than the other benefits ($M_{enabling} = 2.78$, $M_{enticing} = 3.49$, and $M_{enriching} = 5.76$, $p < .05$); Lucy Liu, higher in enabling than the other benefits ($M_{enabling} = 5.63$, $M_{enticing} = 3.23$ and $M_{enriching} = 3.58$, $p < .05$); and Ben Stiller, higher in enticing than the other benefits ($M_{enabling} = 2.68$, $M_{enticing} = 5.96$, and $M_{enriching} = 3.63$, $p < .05$). Finally, The conditions did not differ in ways that might produce potential confounding effects (Table 2).

4.1.5. Transfer effects of endorser's benefits to brand's benefits

A repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the effect of the four conditions (no endorser, Ben Stiller,

Table 1
Measurement items and reliabilities.

Measures	Items	Study 1		Study 2		Study 3	
		T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
Endorser enabling benefit	X has benefits that make me feel empowered X has benefits that make me feel efficacious X has benefits that make me feel capable X has benefits that make me feel resourceful X has benefits that make me feel protected		0.96		0.98		0.86
Endorser enticing benefit	X has benefits that are fun to look at X has benefits that arouse pleasant visual, auditory sensations or experiences X has benefits that gratify my visual or auditory senses X has benefits that make me feel stimulated		0.80		0.98		0.89
Endorser enriching benefit	X has benefits that express my identity X has benefits that reinforce my values and beliefs X has benefits that provide a sense of inspiration X has benefits that make me feel special X has benefits that make me feel proud		0.94		0.98		0.85
Brand enabling benefit	The brand has benefits that make me feel empowered The brand has benefits that make me feel efficacious The brand has benefits that make me feel capable The brand has benefits that make me feel resourceful The brand has benefits that make me feel protected	0.81	0.91	0.98	0.98	0.94	0.93
Brand enticing benefit	The brand has benefits that are fun to look at, taste, touch, smell, experience, or consume The brand has benefits that arouse pleasant visual, auditory, gustatory, tactile, or olfactory sensations or experiences The brand has benefits that gratify my visual, auditory, gustatory, tactile, or olfactory senses The brand has benefits that make me feel stimulated	0.85	0.86	0.97	0.98	0.94	0.91
Brand enriching benefit	The brand has benefits that express my identity The brand has benefits that reinforce my values and beliefs The brand has benefits that provide a sense of inspiration The brand has benefits that make me feel special The brand has benefits that make me feel proud	0.80	0.91	0.98	0.98	0.89	0.90
Brand relevance	How interested are you in X? How relevant is X to you?	0.72		0.84		0.65	
Attitude toward endorser	I have very positive feelings toward X. My impression of X is very bad. (reverse coded) I have negative feelings toward X. (reverse coded) I have very favorable feelings toward X		0.89		0.96		0.91
Fit between brand and endorser	How well do coffee machines and X go together? To what extent does X's endorsement of the brand make sense to you? How well do coffee machines fit with X's brand image? X and coffee machines go very well together Coffee machines and X's brand image have a strong fit		0.87		0.98		0.94
Endorsement believability	How believable is X's endorsement for the brand? How credible is X's endorsement for the brand?		0.82		0.88		0.77
Feeling of Elevation (Study 3)	I feel compassion after seeing the endorser X I feel inspired after seeing the endorser X I feel awe after seeing the endorser X I feel admiration after seeing the endorser X I want to be more like the endorser X The endorser X has shown me how to be a better person I am going to try to follow the endorser X's example I need to do more to help other people I can learn a lot from the endorser X The endorser X is my role model						0.94

*Note: Correlations are reported for two-item measures; Cronbach alphas are reported for three- to five-item measures.
*T1: Time 1, T2: Time 2.

Lucy Liu, and Whoopi Goldberg) on the respective level of a brand's three benefits between Times 1 and 2 when consumers had no information about the brand's benefits. Since we examine whether an endorser's high benefits transfer to the corresponding brand benefits, the dependent variables are the levels of enabling, enticing, or enriching brand benefits. Thus, we conducted a repeated-measures ANOVA three times for each dependent variable (see Fig. 1).

First, we examine the transfer effect of endorsers' enabling benefit on a brand's enabling benefit. A multivariate analysis tests the results for *Time* (within-subject factors) and the *Time*Endorser* interaction. There was a significant main effect of *Time* on the enabling benefit score, sphericity assumed ($F(1, 206) = 16.209$, $p = .000$), and a significant interaction between the effects of *Time* and *Endorser* on (enabling benefit) ($F(3, 206) = 9.502$, $p = .000$).

According to the tests of between-subject effects (four endorser conditions), the main effect of the treatment group on the enabling benefit score across time is statistically significant ($F(3, 206) = 4.091$, $p = .008$). The graph shows the average ratings of enabling benefits when the celebrity is "no endorser," Ben Stiller, Lucy Liu, and Whoopi Goldberg. Essentially, the ratings for the conditions of no endorser, Ben Stiller, and Whoopi Goldberg do not change over time. However, for Lucy Liu (with high enabling benefits), the ratings of enabling benefits for the brand increase significantly over time, indicating that the high enabling benefit Lucy provides has transferred to the brand.

Next, we examine the transfer effect of endorsers' enticing benefit on the brand's enticing benefit. The main effect of *Time* on the enticing benefit score is not significant, sphericity assumed ($F(1, 206) = 1.618$, $p = .205$), and the interaction between the effects of *Time* and *Endorser* on

the enticing benefit is statistically significant ($F(3, 206) = 9.123$, $p = .000$). According to the tests of between-subject effects (four endorser conditions), the main effect of the treatment group on the enticing benefit score across time is statistically significant ($F(3, 206) = 4.470$, $p = .005$). The graph shows that the ratings for the conditions of no endorser, Lucy Liu, and Whoopi Goldberg changed slightly over time. However, for Ben Stiller, the ratings of brand enticing benefits increased significantly over time, indicating that the high enticing benefit Ben provides has transferred to the brand's enticing benefit.

Finally, we examine the transfer effect of endorsers' enriching benefit on the brand's enriching benefit. *Time's* main effect on the enriching benefit score is not significant, sphericity assumed ($F(1, 206) = 1.618$, $p = .205$), and the interaction between the effects of *Time* and the endorser on the enriching benefit is statistically significant ($F(3, 206) = 9.123$, $p = .000$). According to the tests of between-subject effects (four endorser conditions), the main effect of the treatment group on the enriching benefit score across time is statistically significant ($F(3, 206) = 4.470$, $p = .005$). The graph shows the ratings for no endorser, Ben Stiller, and Lucy Liu slightly changed over time. However, ratings of the enriching benefits for Whoopi Goldberg increased significantly over time, indicating that the high enriching benefit Whoopi provides has transferred to the brand's enriching benefit.

Thus, taken together, when respondents have no information about the brand's benefits, each of the endorser's strong benefits can successfully transfer to the corresponding benefit of the brand across the respective benefit conditions, thereby supporting H1.

4.1.6. Discussion

In line with our theorizing, Study 1 demonstrates that the secondary brand associations affect evaluations of an unknown product when consumers cannot evaluate an endorsed brand by its benefits. Consumers are likely to accept the celebrity endorsers' benefits as the endorsed brand's benefit when the brand is new to them. Therefore, in case consumers are unaware of the specific benefits of the brand, celebrity endorsements can be an effective complementarity strategy to build all 3E brand benefits. However, one wonders about the effects of celebrity endorsement when the benefits of a brand are known to consumers. We thus conducted Study 2.

4.2. Study 2: Transfer of endorsers' 3E benefits to well-known brands

4.2.1. Method

Study 2 examines the transfer effects of celebrity endorsers' benefits to an endorsed brand when consumers possess knowledge about the brand's extant 3E benefits. Specifically, we focused on examining how each of the strong benefits of a celebrity endorser transfers to the endorsed brand with corresponding weak benefits, indicating the complementary conditions. We again used the fictitious coffee machine brand (Mardi) and the same set of celebrities from Study 1. However, Study 2 provided information about the 3E brand benefits, such as the product image, feature descriptions, and the brand name "Mardi" (see Fig. 2). By manipulating the degree of 3E benefits with the brand information, we created three brand conditions since the critical design factor in this experiment is to create the complementary condition. Hence, each brand condition has weakness in one benefit and strength in the other two benefits. As in Study 1, each condition is paired with three types of endorsers. Namely, we had a 3 (brand with only low enticing benefit, low enabling benefit, or low enriching benefit) × 3 (endorser with only high enticing benefit: Ben Stiller; high enabling benefit: Lucy Liu; or high in enriching benefit: Whoopi Goldberg) between-subjects design. Thus, one of the three brand conditions shows the complementary condition by pairing the brand with celebrity endorsers high in a particular benefit the brand does not have. For example, Ben Stiller, who is strong in the enticing benefit, is matched with the brand condition that shows weakness in that benefit. Among the nine conditions, we thus have three complementary conditions. Unless otherwise indicated, all

Table 2
Study 1: Manipulation checks and hypotheses testing.

	Control	Whoopi Goldberg	Lucy Liu	Ben Stiller
	No Endorser (N = 52)	Low enabling, Low enticing, *High enriching* (N = 53)	*High enabling*, Low enticing, Low enriching (N = 52)	Low enabling, *High enticing*, Low enriching (N = 53)
Manipulation checks (Time 1)				
Enabling brand benefits	2.27[a]	2.37[a]	2.24[a]	2.52[a]
Enticing brand benefits	2.59[a]	2.81[a]	2.75[a]	2.65[a]
Enriching brand benefits	2.12[a]	2.18[a]	2.23[a]	2.28[a]
Confounds				
Coffee machine's relevance	4.96[a]	5.07[a]	5.14[a]	5.25[a]
Endorser attitude		5.70[a]	6.21[a]	6.12[a]
Endorser relevance		5.58[a]	5.43[a]	5.54[a]
Endorsement believability		5.89[a]	5.80[a]	5.49[a]
Endorsement fit		5.37[a]	5.42[a]	5.35[a]
Dependent variables (Time 2)				
Enabling brand benefits	2.35[b]	2.46[b]	**3.77[a]**	2.66[b]
Enticing brand benefits	2.50[b]	2.52[b]	2.58[b]	**3.76[a]**
Enriching brand benefits	2.40[b]	**3.86[a]**	2.45[b]	2.37[b]

*Note: Means with different superscripts are significantly different, $p < .05$; Bold-faced figures indicate successful manipulation checks or support for our hypotheses.

Study 2 and its pre-test items were measured identically to Study 1.

4.2.2. Pre-tests

After creating the stimulus for Mardi's three brand scenario conditions with manipulated 3E benefits, we conducted manipulation checks for each scenario to see if participants perceived the stimulus as intended. Regarding the brand with only low enabling benefits (high enticing and enriching benefits), pre-test ($N = 32$) results showed that participants observed that the brand has a low enabling benefit ($M = 2.68$), high enticing benefit ($M = 7.79$), and high enriching benefit ($M = 7.61$). Regarding the brand with only low enticing benefits (high enabling and enriching benefits), pre-test ($N = 33$) results showed that participants observed that the brand has a low enticing benefit ($M = 2.94$), high enabling benefit ($M = 7.37$), and high enriching benefit ($M = 7.49$). Regarding the brand with only low enriching benefits (with high enabling and enticing benefits), pre-test ($N = 31$) results showed that participants observed that the brand has a low enriching benefit ($M = 2.90$), high enticing benefit ($M = 7.62$), and high enabling benefit ($M = 7.52$). Thus, we confirmed that we successfully manipulated all three brand scenarios.

4.2.3. Respondents and procedures

As part of a regular course requirement at their University, 239 students participated in Study 2. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of the nine conditions outlined in Fig. 1. As in Study 1, we conducted experiments at Times 1 and 2. At Time 1, participants were asked to read a blog review commentary for Mardi, which shows one of the three brand conditions, and answer questions on their perceived benefits of the brand on a nine-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 9 = strongly agree). Further, to control extraneous variables, respondents answered questions on brand excerpt believability, coffee machine

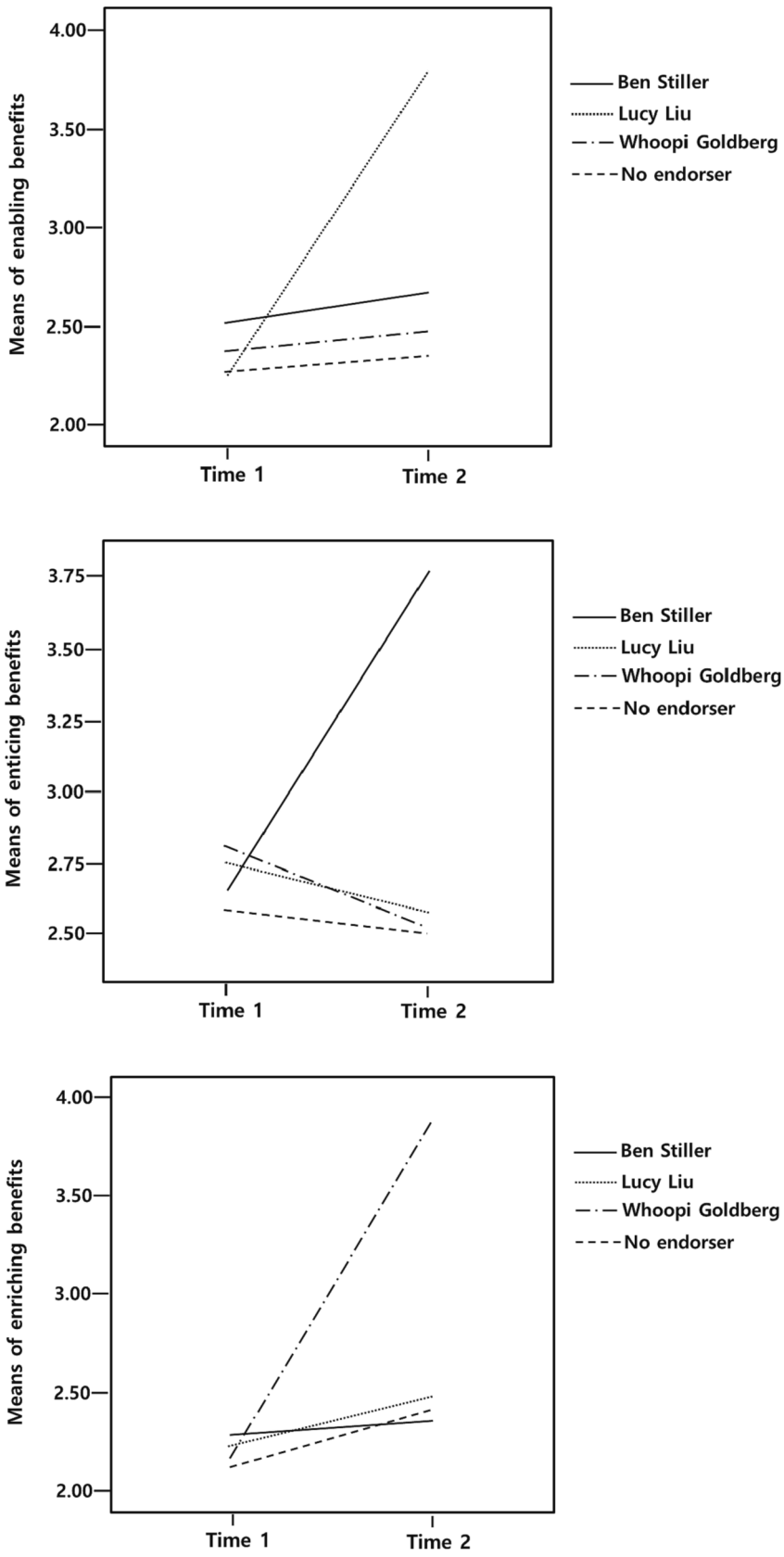


Fig. 1. The results of repeated-measures ANOVA (Study 1).

relevance, and the current ownership of a coffee machine.

After one week (Time 2), we invited the same participants to read the blog review commentary about Mardi seen in Time 1. Importantly, the commentary featured one of the three celebrity endorsers. Next, participants were asked to answer questions on the 3E benefits of the brand and endorsers on a nine-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 9 = strongly agree). As part of our controls, we measured respondents' attitude toward the endorser (α = 0.972), fit between the brand and endorser (α = 0.982), and endorsement believability (r = 0.884) on a nine-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 9 = strongly agree) at Time 2.

4.2.4. Results

Manipulation checks and potential confounds. As indicated in Table 3, the manipulations were successful. The results further indicated that the conditions did not differ in ways that might produce potential confounders. Regarding the brand condition, since we manipulate only one benefit of the brand that is low among the 3E benefits, respondents should perceive that the only benefit we manipulate is lower than the other benefits. For example, the results show that in the low enabling brand condition, the enabling benefit was regarded as significantly lower than the enticing and enriching benefits (e.g., $M_{enabling} = 2.77$, $M_{enticing} = 6.50$, and $M_{enriching} = 5.91$, $p < .05$). Regarding endorser conditions, as in Study 1, we used three endorsers with only one high benefit among the three benefits. All respondents successfully perceived that only the manipulated benefit is higher than the other benefits across all conditions. Table 3 reports detailed results and statistics of the other conditions.

4.2.5. Transfer effects of endorsers' benefits on brands' benefits

In Study 2, as in Study 1, a repeated-measures two-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of endorser type on the level of each of the three benefits of the brand between Times 1 and 2 under three brand conditions: low enabling benefit, enticing benefit, and enriching benefit (see Fig. 3).

First, we examine the transfer effect of endorsers' enabling benefit on a brand's enabling benefit for brands with low enabling benefit. A multivariate analysis tests the results for *Time* (within-subject factors) and the *time*endorser* interaction. There was no significant main effect of *Time* on the enabling benefit score, sphericity assumed ($F(1, 75) = 0.810$, $p = .371$); there was no significant interaction between the effects of *time* and *endorser* on the enabling benefit ($F(2, 75) = 0.483$, $p = .619$). According to the tests of between-subject effects (three endorser conditions), the main effect of the type of endorsers on the ratings of enabling benefit across time is not statistically significant ($F(2, 75) = 598$, $p = .553$). When the celebrity endorser is Ben Stiller, Lucy Liu, or Whoopi Goldberg, the ratings in all celebrity conditions do not change over time. Importantly, although Lucy Liu has a high enabling benefit, her benefit did not transfer to the brand's benefit when respondents knew the brand has a low enabling benefit. Thus, for brands respondents are known to, an endorser's enabling benefit does not complement and help strengthen a brand with corresponding low benefits, thereby

The text below is from a well-known blogger, who frequently posts consumption reviews in various product categories.

* The features of Mardi's coffee machines are more useful and versatile than other coffee machine brands. They also have great benefits in terms of ease of use and are quite simple to operate and are easy to move around. Moreover, they are very easy to clean.

* Mardi's coffee machines look very stylish and attractive. Mardi's design is acclaimed by artists worldwide. Besides, there are many color options to choose, and all colors are beautiful. Mardi's coffee machines match well with different interior design styles.

* The tagline of Mardi is "find your greatness." Mardi gives an inspirational meaning that expresses the core belief that each human being has the potential for greatness. This tagline is truly touching and makes the brand very different from others.

(a) Study 2: The scenario for all high benefits conditions

The text below is from a well-known blogger, who frequently posts consumption reviews in various product categories.

* The features of Mardi's coffee machines are not particularly superior to any other brand. They have several drawbacks in terms of ease of use. Mardi coffee machines are not that easy to operate and they are hard to move around somewhat. Moreover, they are tricky to clean.

* Mardi's coffee machines do not look very stylish and attractive. Mardi's design is not acclaimed by artists around the world. Besides, it does not have many color options to choose from. Mardi's coffee machines are difficult to match well with different interior design styles.

* The tagline of Mardi is "Enjoy a cup of fresh coffee." Mardi offers a standard message that expresses a common statement without any core belief of the brand. This tagline is not particularly touching and does not make the brand very different from others.

(b) Study 2: The scenario for all low benefits conditions

Fig. 2. Scenarios for all high and low benefits conditions.

supporting H2.

Next, we examine the transfer effect of endorsers' enticing benefit on the brand's corresponding benefit for the brand with a low enticing benefit. A multivariate analysis tests the results for *Time* (the within-subject factors) and the *time*endorser* interaction. There was no significant main effect of *Time* on the enticing benefit score, sphericity assumed ($F(1, 77) = 1.755$, $p = .189$); there was a significant interaction between the effects of *Time* and *Endorser* on enabling benefit, $F(2, 77) = 1.348$, $p = .266$). According to the tests of between-subject effects (four endorser conditions), the main effect of the treatment group on the enticing benefit score across time is not statistically significant ($F(2, 77) = 0.166$, $p = .847$). The ratings regarding all celebrity endorsers do not significantly change over time. Given that Ben Stiller has low enticing benefits, enticing benefits of the brand do not significantly change. In support of H2, an endorser's enticing benefit does not complement and help strengthen a brand benefit that is low in the corresponding benefits when the brand's benefits are known to consumers.

Finally, we examine the transfer effect of endorsers' enriching benefit on a brand's benefit for brands with low enriching benefit. A multivariate analysis tests the results for *Time* (the within-subject factors) and the *time*endorser* interaction. There was no significant main effect of *Time* on the enriching benefit score, sphericity assumed ($F(1, 77) = 17.013$, $p = .000$); there was a significant interaction between the effects of *Time* and *Endorser* on (enriching benefit) ($F(2, 77) = 30.442$, $p = .000$). According to the tests of between-subject effects (three endorser conditions), the main effect of the treatment group on the enriching benefit score across time is not statistically significant, $F(2, 77) = 16.313$, $p = .000$. Specifically, regarding Ben Stiller and Lucy Liu, there was no significant difference in the level of Mardi's enriching benefits ($t(27) = 1.410$, $p = .170$; ($t(25) = 0.317$, $p = .714$) at Times 1 and 2, respectively. However, as we theorized, regarding Whoopi Goldberg, who embodies a high enriching benefit, there was a significant difference in Mardi's level of corresponding benefit at Times 1 ($M = 2.985$, $SD = 1.610$) and 2 ($M = 6.200$, $SD = 2.074$); ($t(27) = 7.142$, p = .000). The enriching benefit of the brand has been significantly increased, even though participants were previously informed about the brand's weak enriching Together, these results support H2.

4.2.6. Discussion

Based on our findings, the transfer of the celebrity endorsers' benefits to the endorsed brand depends on consumer knowledge about the brand. Specifically, when consumers have knowledge that the brand lacks intrinsic benefits (enabling and enticing benefits), the celebrity endorsers are not likely to complement the intrinsic benefits of the brand because a brand needs to have the intrinsic benefits of the product itself. However, when the brand lacks extrinsic benefits (enriching benefits),

Table 3
Study 2: Manipulation checks and hypotheses testing.

N = 520	**Brand Low enabling benefit** (low enabling/high enticing/ high enriching)			**Brand Low enticing benefit** (low enticing/high enabling/ high enriching)			**Brand Low enriching benefit** (low enriching/high enticing/ high enabling)		
Manipulation checks (Time 1)	**Lucy Liu** (high enabling) (N = 26)	**Ben Stiller** (high enticing) (N = 25)	**Whoopi G** (high enriching) (N = 27)	**Lucy Liu** (high enabling) (N = 26)	**Ben Stiller** (high enticing) (N = 28)	**Whoopi G** (high enriching) (N = 26)	**Lucy Liu** (high enabling) (N = 25)	**Ben Stiller** (high enticing) (N = 27)	**Whoopi G** (high enriching) (N = 28)
Enabling brand benefits	2.53	3.09	2.71	5.87	6.60	6.20	6.56	6.03	6.26
Enticing brand benefits	6.50	6.39	6.60	2.58	2.75	2.84	5.73	6.81	6.41
Enriching brand benefits	6.24	5.90	5.61	6.00	5.93	6.16	3.19	2.91	2.98
Endorser enabling benefits	5.15	2.17	3.25	6.10	2.98	2.75	6.26	3.38	3.32
Endorser enticing benefits	3.07	5.31	3.60	3.93	6.08	2.71	3.22	5.60	3.06
Endorsers enriching benefits	2.81	2.51	6.00	3.40	3.17	6.30	2.84	3.76	5.57
Confounders									
Brand excerpt believability (Time 1)	6.19 [a]	6.12 [a]	5.87 [a]	6.53 [a]	6.39 [a]	5.96 [a]	6.14 [a]	6.25 [a]	6.10 [a]
Brand excerpt relevance (Time 1)	5.67 [a]	5.30 [a]	5.51 [a]	5.52 [a]	5.78 [a]	5.75 [a]	5.26 [a]	5.74 [a]	5.94 [a]
Current ownership (1 = yes) (Time 1)	0.88 [a]	0.84 [a]	0.88 [a]	0.92 [a]	0.89 [a]	0.92 [a]	0.96 [a]	0.88 [a]	0.92 [a]
Endorser attitude (Time 2)	5.46 [a]	5.46 [a]	5.41 [a]	5.45 [a]	4.80 [a]	5.46 [a]	4.52 [a]	5.10 [a]	5.90 [a]
Endorsement believability (Time 2)	5.40 [a]	5.72 [a]	5.16 [a]	5.61 [a]	5.30 [a]	5.40 [a]	5.56 [a]	4.87 [a]	5.57 [a]
Endorsement fit (Time 2)	6.03 [a]	5.30 [a]	5.53 [a]	5.26 [a]	5.27[a]	5.72 [a]	6.07 [a]	5.34 [a]	5.48 [a]
Dependent variables (Time 2)									
Enabling brand benefits	2.62	3.07	2.97	6.10	4.54	6.30	6.12	4.61	6.29
Enticing brand benefits	6.72	6.34	6.67	2.95	2.66	3.04	7.11	7.05	6.65
Enriching brand benefits	6.10	3.83	5.59	6.33	4.63	6.25	3.07	2.48	6.20

Note: Means with same superscripts are not significantly different, $p < .05$.

the celebrity endorser with high enriching benefits is likely to complement the extrinsic benefit of the brand. Studies 1–2 were conducted in a Western economy. One wonders whether the results hold in a different cultural context. In Study 3, we also used a different set of celebrities and different fictitious brand to increase our findings' generalizability.

4.3. Study 3: Examining the mediating role of elevation and generalizability of findings

4.3.1. Method

In Study 3, we employed a set of Chinese celebrities and created a fictitious smartphone brand, "Lumigon." Further, to alleviate any gender effect, we employed celebrities of the same gender. All three endorsers were male. We chose a smartphone brand instead of the coffee machine brand in Studies 1 and 2 for the following reasons. First, we intended to select a stimulus from a product category other than home appliances to further validate the influence of the benefits of celebrity endorsers on brands. Second, celebrity endorsement is pervasive in consumer electronics product settings.

To directly compare the transfer effects of an endorser's benefit for unknown and well-known brand cases, we created two brand conditions: the conditions with and without information on brand benefits. Importantly, we focused on and created complementary conditions regarding well-known brand conditions. All conditions in the unknown brand case are designed to show complementary situations.

Study 3 was a 3 (endorser with only high enabling benefit, high enticing benefit, or high enriching benefit) × 2 (well-known or unknown brand benefits) experiment. Unlike Studies 1 and 2, which employed celebrity endorsers of different genders and occupations, Study 3 employed three male athletes: Fangyu Zhu, a professional basketball player, for the celebrity with only high enabling benefit; Zetao Ning, an attractive swimming athlete, for only high enticing benefit; and Ming Yao, a former basketball player and current philanthropist, for only high enriching benefit. For manipulating the well-known brand condition, we used the same procedure as in Study 2. In the unknown brand condition, the experiment scenario solely shows a brand name endorsed by a celebrity. In the well-known brand condition, the experiment scenario includes the blog commentary about the brand and descriptions of the three benefits of the brand which complement the benefits of the endorser. For example, as shown in Table 4a, the well-known brand case of Fangyu Zhu, with a very high enabling benefit, matches Lumigon, which has a very low enabling benefit. Therefore, Study 3 has six experimental conditions.

Pre-test. Eighty-two participants (73.2 % female, average age of 23.42 years) were recruited from a university in China. The participants were randomly assigned to evaluate one of the following three celebrities, Fangyu Zhu ($N = 24$), Zetao Ning ($N = 29$), and Ming Yao ($N = 29$). The three endorsers were selected because they are all celebrity athletes with high popularity among Chinese consumers, thereby ruling out potential confounding factors such as celebrity expertise and familiarity. In the pre-test, the participants were asked to evaluate their enabling, enticing, and enriching benefits (Table 4b).

4.3.2. Respondents and procedure

238 participants (63.0 % female, average age of 29.38) were recruited online to participate in the study at a university in China and randomly assigned to one of the six conditions. The experiments were conducted at Times 1 and 2. At Time 1, participants were instructed to read a blog commentary of a smartphone brand named Lumigon and evaluate the 3E benefits of the brand (outcome variable) and their relevance with the smartphone product category (control variable). After one week, at Time 2, the same participants were shown a blog commentary with a celebrity endorser. After reading the blog commentary, participants were evaluated on their perceptions of the 3E benefits of the endorser and the brand and three control variables (i.e., attitude toward an endorser, fit with the brand, and endorsement believability). All constructs, including the feeling of elevation, were measured using the same items and nine-point Likert scale as Study 2.

4.3.3. Results

Manipulation checks. We successfully manipulated the levels of endorsers' benefits. For the manipulation of celebrity endorsers, the results indicate that Fangyu Zhu was perceived to have higher enabling ($M_{enabling} = 6.43$) than enticing ($M_{enticing} = 5.89$, $p < 0.001$) and enriching benefits ($M_{enriching} = 5.92$, $p < 0.001$); Zetao Ning, higher enticing ($M_{enticing} = 6.90$) than enabling ($M_{enabling} = 5.80$, $p < 0.001$) and enriching benefits ($M_{enriching} = 6.32$, $p < 0.001$); and Ming Yao, higher enriching ($M_{enriching} = 6.89$) than enabling ($M_{enabling} = 5.91$, $p < 0.001$) and enticing benefits ($M_{enabling} = 6.15$, $p < 0.001$). For the manipulation of brand benefits, relative to the condition with no brand benefit information, participants perceived the brand we manipulated as low among the three benefits as having the lower benefit. Specifically, relative to the condition without brand benefit information, (1) participants perceived the brand as having a significant lower enabling benefit in the condition with brand benefit information ($M_{\text{without enabling benefit}} = 6.31$, $M_{\text{with enabling benefit}} = 3.91$, $p < 0.001$); (2) participants considered the brand as having a lower enticing benefit in the condition with brand benefit information ($M_{\text{without enticing benefit}} = 5.69$, $M_{\text{with enticing benefit}} = 5.09$, $p < 0.05$); (3) the participants perceived the brand as having a lower enriching benefit in the condition with brand benefit information ($M_{\text{without enriching benefit}} = 6.16$, $M_{\text{with enriching benefit}} = 5.54$, $p < 0.05$).

4.3.4. The transfer effects of endorser's benefits on brand's benefits

When brand benefits are unknown, consistent with the results in Study 1, Study 3 demonstrates that each of the three benefits of the corresponding endorser successfully transferred to the endorsed brand, Lumigon, when consumers have no information on the brand. As shown in Table 5, high enabling endorser (i.e., Fangyu Zhu) increases consumers' evaluation on brand enabling benefit ($M_{T1} = 6.31$, $M_{T2} = 6.80$, $p = 0.049$), whereas the endorser has no significant impact on brand enticing or enriching benefits. High enticing endorser (i.e., Zetao Ning) enhances their perceived brand enticing benefit ($M_{T1} = 5.57$, $M_{T2} = 6.13$, $p = 0.003$), with no significant influence on brand enabling or enriching benefits. Finally, high enriching endorser (i.e., Ming Yao) leads to increased brand enriching benefits ($M_{T1} = 6.16$, $M_{T2} = 6.55$, $p = 0.023$), but fails to enhance brand enabling or enriching benefits. In other words, there are significant increases in the levels of each of the three benefits between Times 1 and 2 across all three endorser conditions, thereby supporting H1a, H1b, and H1c.

When brand benefits are known to consumers, the results show that only the enriching benefits of the endorser complemented the corresponding weak benefits of the endorsed brand. Endorsers' enabling and enticing benefits fail to enhance the corresponding weak benefits of the endorsed brand. As shown in Table 6, in the condition where the brand has a low enabling benefit and the endorser is high in enabling benefit (Fangyu Zhu), relative to Time 1, the endorser has no significant effect on improving the enabling benefit at Time 2 ($M_{T1} = 3.91$, $M_{T2} = 4.32$, $p = 0.130$). Similarly, in the condition where the brand has low enticing benefit and the endorser is high in enticing benefit (Zetao Ning), the endorser has no significant effect on improving the enticing benefit at Time 2 relative to Time 1 ($M_{T1} = 5.17$, $M_{T2} = 5.45$, $p = 0.101$). Nonetheless, in the condition where the brand has low enriching benefit and the endorser is high in enriching benefit (Ming Yao), relative to Time 1, the perceived enriching benefit of the brand is significantly enhanced by the endorser at Time 2 ($M_{T1} = 5.54$, $M_{T2} = 6.12$, $p = 0.001$). The results show that H2a, H2b, and H2c are supported.

We employed a bootstrapping method using Hayes' (2013) *PROCESS* macro with 5,000 bootstrap samples to test the mediating effects of the feeling of elevation. Accordingly, the indirect effect of the enabling benefits of a celebrity endorser as mediated by the feeling of elevation, is insignificant ($\beta = 0.042$, SE = 0.065, 95 % confidence interval [CI] = [−0.072, 0.192]). The indirect effect of the enticing benefits of a

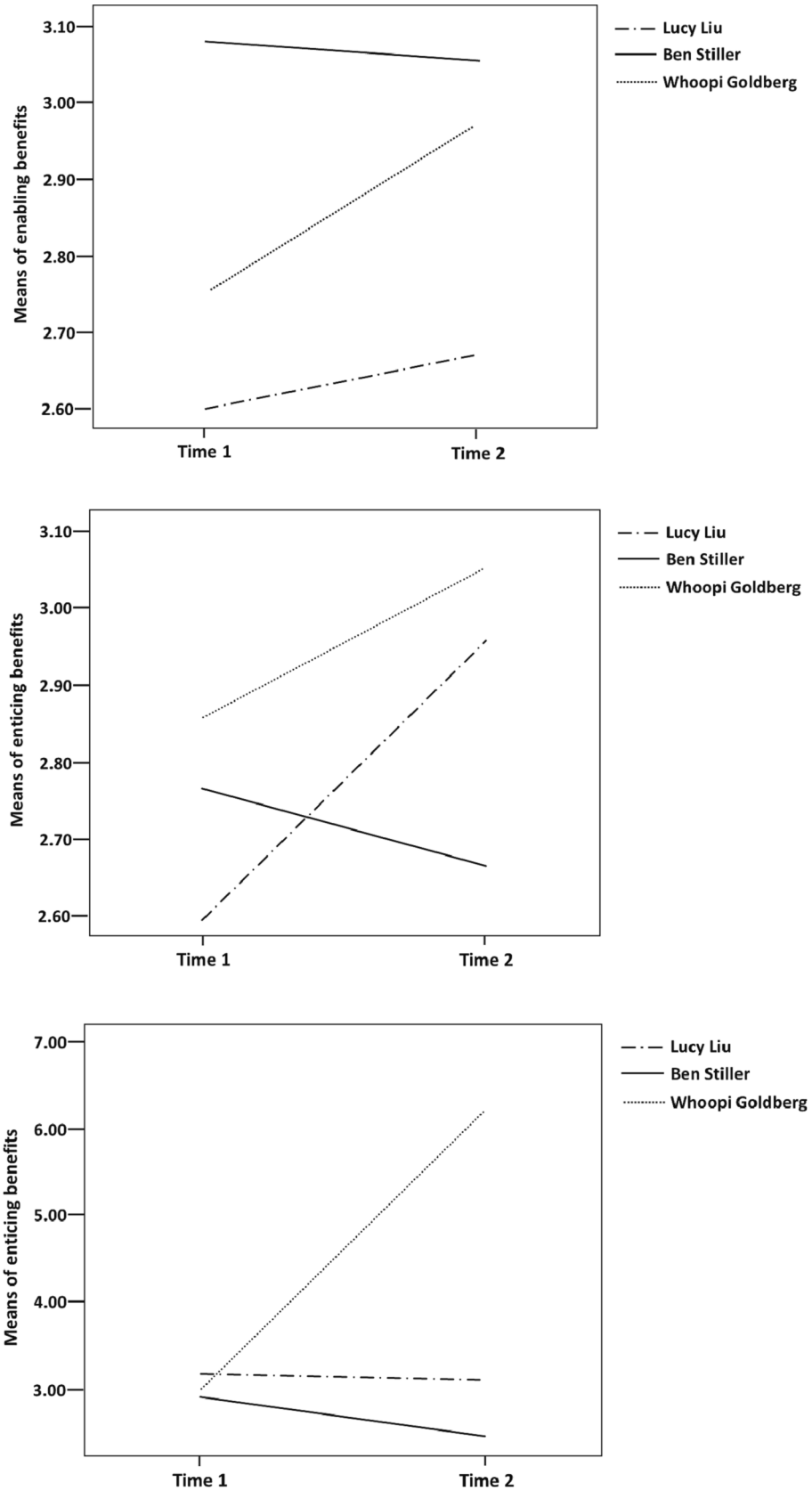


Fig. 3. The results of repeated-measures ANOVA (Study 2).

Table 4a
Study 3: Experiment conditions.

		Endorsers		
		Fangyu Zhu High enabling, Low enticing, Low enriching	Zetao Ning Low enabling, High enticing, Low enriching	Ming Yao Low enabling, Low enticing, High enriching
Three benefits of Lumigon	Without brand benefit (control) With brand benefit (treatment)	(N = 45) No information on brand benefits (N = 41) low enabling high enticing high enriching	(N = 43) No information on brand benefits (N = 41) high enabling low enticing high enriching	(N = 40) No information on brand benefits (N = 40) high enabling high enticing low enriching

Table 4b
Study 3: Results of pre-test.

	Fang Zhu	Zetao Ning	Ming Yao
Enabling benefit	High (M = 6.09)	Low (M = 4.79)	Low (M = 5.03)
Enticing benefit	Low (M = 4.24)	High (M = 6.49)	Low (M = 4.81)
Enriching benefit	Low (M = 4.46) F (2, 84) = 14.422, p < 0.001	Low (M = 5.44) F (2, 84) = 7.947, p = 0.001	High (M = 6.30) F (2, 84) = 6.388, p = 0.003

celebrity endorser as mediated by the feeling of elevation is also insignificant (β = 0.003, SE = 0.129, 95 % confidence interval [CI] = [−0.261, 0.258]). However, the indirect effect of the enriching benefits of a celebrity endorser as mediated by the feeling of elevation is significant (β = 0.135, SE = 0.052, 95 % confidence interval [CI] = [0.051, 0.253]). The results indicate that the feeling of elevation mediates the transfer of the enriching benefit of an endorser to a brand, thus supporting H3.

4.3.5. Discussion

Consistent with the findings in Studies 1 and 2, Study 3 shows that only the enriching benefits of the endorser complemented the weak corresponding benefits of the endorsed brand when respondents already have 3E benefit information on the endorsed brands. In addition, the endorser's enabling, enticing, and enriching benefits are transferred to the endorsed brands when respondents have no prior 3E benefit information on the endorsed brands. Critically, Study 3 shows that the celebrity endorser's enriching benefits are transferred to the endorsed brand through elevation.

5. General discussion and conclusion

5.1. Summary

This study theorizes and examines how the strong benefits of a celebrity endorser can complement the weak corresponding benefits of the endorsed brand. We conducted three studies to show what type of celebrity benefits, and in which circumstances such celebrity benefits are transferred to an endorsed brand. The findings in Study 1 show that when consumers have no knowledge about the benefits of a brand, a celebrity's 3E benefits get transferred to the brand. That is, when consumers have no prior knowledge about a brand, a celebrity endorser may complement the unknown brand's benefits regardless of benefit types. The findings in Study 2 demonstrate that when consumers are aware of a brand's weak 3E benefits, only the celebrity endorsers' enriching benefits are transferred to the brand. That is, when consumers know the brand has weak intrinsic benefits (enabling, enticing), a celebrity endorser is unlikely to help complement them. The results of Study 1 and 2 hence indicate the importance of a celebrity's enriching benefits in complementary celebrity endorsement as it is the only benefit that can transfer to the endorsed brand regardless of consumer brand knowledge. Further, Study 3 showed elevation as the underlying mechanism whereby the enriching benefits of a celebrity endorser are transferred to a brand.

5.2. Theoretical contributions

The current findings contribute to the growing literature on celebrity endorsement marketing strategies. Specifically, the study suggests a new perspective of celebrity endorsement regarding the complementarity strategy to build desired brand associations by leveraging secondary associations. That is, this study extends previous research, which largely focuses on the commonality strategy of similarity or matching between a brand and its endorser (Albert et al., 2017; Kamins, 1990; Lee & Thorson, 2008; Till & Busler, 2000). As previous studies have shown, high levels of congruency between a celebrity endorser and an endorsed brand make celebrity endorsement effective. However, the current findings suggest that the complementarity approach using a celebrity with no matching benefits with the focal brand is also an effective celebrity endorsement strategy and, thus, extend the literature on celebrity endorsement and leveraging secondary association theory.

Moreover, we examined the various benefits of brands by drawing on 3E brand benefits to show when the benefits of a celebrity endorser can effectively complement different weak brand benefits. It is important to consider the diverse benefits of brands for celebrity endorsements since brand benefits by their nature (intrinsic or extrinsic) are perceived differently by customers, requiring different complementary strategies based on the level of consumer knowledge about an endorsed brand. To the best of our knowledge, no prior studies have applied 3E brand benefits to the context of celebrity endorsement.

Further, the findings emphasize the important role of a celebrity's enriching benefits in celebrity endorsements because, given the nature of extrinsic brand benefits, only enriching benefits can get transferred to a brand regardless of the level of consumer knowledge of the brand. The results suggest that the significance of the enriching benefits of a celebrity endorser and the transfer mechanism needs further study. In this regard, we revealed how a celebrity endorser's enriching benefits complement the low enriching benefits of an endorsed brand through a feeling of elevation, regardless of the level of consumer knowledge about the brand. Thus, as one of the first that studies elevation in the context of business study, the current findings on elevation may shed light on a new research stream of celebrity endorsement; namely, celebrities may act as a source of elevation for the customers of certain brands (e.g., consider Michael Jordan and Nike or Lindsey Vonn and Red Bull, George Clooney and Nescafe, etc.). Admiration, which is also part of the other-praising emotions, has been studied in the context of business study. Thus, further studies on elevation and its role in the context of celebrity endorsement is richly deserving. In addition to theoretical contributions, the current findings provide critical insights for marketing practitioners.

Table 5
Study 3: Results of the hypotheses testing.

	Fangyu Zhu		Zetao Ning		Ming Yao	
	Without brand benefits	With brand benefits	Without brand benefits	With brand benefits	Without brand benefits	With brand benefits
Enabling (Time 1)	**6.31 (1.61)**	**3.91 (1.96)**	5.72 (1.22)	6.94 (1.18)	6.26 (0.93)	6.39 (1.43)
Enabling (Time 2)	**6.80 (1.27)**	**4.32 (1.63)**	5.91 (1.31)	6.82 (1.21)	6.83 (0.88)	6.04 (1.56)
	***t* = -2.036, *p* = 0.049**	***t* = -1.507, *p* = 0.130**	$t = 0.908$, $p = .369$	$t = 0.764$, $p = .450$	$t = -4.417$ $p < .001$*	$t = 1.382$ $p = .175$
Enticing (Time 1)	7.30 (1.10)	7.17 (1.05)	**5.57 (1.96)**	**5.17 (2.21)**	7.40 (1.08)	7.01 (0.99)
Enticing l (Time 2)	7.06 (1.33)	6.80 (1.22)	**6.13 (1.56)**	**5.45 (1.99)**	7.02 (1.08)	6.51 (1.31)
	$t = 1.286$ $p = .206$	$t = 1.814 p = .077$	***t* = -3.110*p* = .003**	***t* = -1.678*p* = .101**	$t = 2.177$ $p = .036$	$t = 2.284$ $p = .028$
Enriching (Time 1)	6.26 (1.38)	6.32 (1.40)	5.37 (1.39)	6.34 (1.68)	**6.16 (1.18)**	**5.54 (1.41)**
Enriching (Time 2)	6.41 (1.46)	5.96 (1.62)	5.71 (1.47)	6.35 (1.73)	**6.55 (1.21)**	**6.12 (1.25)**
	t = .742p = .462	t = 1.414p = .165	t = -1.679p = .101	t = -.059p = .953	***t* = -2.368 *p* = .023**	***t* = -3.482 *p* = .001**
Feeling of Elevation	6.49 (1.41)	5.99 (1.82)	6.54 (1.17)	6.74 (1.40)	**7.27 (0.89) F(2,117) = 5.37, *p* = .006**	**7.02 (0.79) F(2,117) = 5.66, *p* = .005**

5.3. Managerial implications

Given the current findings on the efficacy of employing the complementarity approach in celebrity endorsements, it is imperative for managers to consider a diverse range of strategies rather than solely relying on the prevalent commonality approach. Complementarity branding strategies are crucial in conveying the intended message to consumers (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). Nonetheless, Keller and Swaminathan (2020) posits that the deployment of meticulously crafted strategies is indispensable to mitigate potential consumer confusion or skepticism. The current findings are hence of critical import and indicate that the successful implementation of a complementarity strategy in celebrity endorsement is contingent upon the consumers' knowledge of the endorsed brands. In instances where consumers are unaware of a product's benefits (e.g., a novel product), they are inclined to ascribe the advantages associated with celebrity endorsers to the endorsed brands. As such, the utilization of a celebrity endorser possessing the desired attributes for the endorsed brand is likely to yield effective results. This approach would also prove beneficial for existing products with limited popularity, as consumers may not possess a comprehensive understanding of the brand's advantages.

Hence, when consumers are aware that the endorsed products do not possess significant enabling or enticing benefits (intrinsic benefits), they fail to perceive the celebrity endorsers' enabling or enticing benefits as complementary to the endorsed product. The current findings, therefore, suggest that businesses should avoid utilizing celebrity endorsers with prominent enabling or enticing benefits to amplify these benefits when the consumers are cognizant of the endorsed product's deficiency in these areas, as this approach proves to be an ineffective endorsement strategy. In order to bolster the weak enabling or enticing benefits, it would be more advantageous for the brand to enhance these benefits within the product itself before capitalizing on a celebrity endorser's corresponding benefits. Once the product is perceived to possess robust enabling or enticing benefits, employing commonality endorsement strategies that exhibit a high congruence between the benefits of a product and an endorser would effectively strengthen these benefits further. Alternatively, based on our findings, the brand could consider selecting a celebrity endorser with exceptional enriching benefits, enabling the endorsed product to augment the enriching benefits for complementarity endorsement strategies, while simultaneously fortifying the enabling and enticing benefits within the product itself.

Considering that the enriching benefits associated with a celebrity can be conferred upon both established and unfamiliar endorsed brands, it is crucial for marketing professionals to judiciously employ celebrity endorsements possessing substantial enriching benefits. Prior research also advocates for the augmentation of a brand's enriching benefits in order to cultivate customer loyalty behaviors (Park et al., 2016). Park and colleagues posit that the enriching benefits of a brand wield greater influence in fostering customer loyalty compared to enabling and enticing benefits, as the former can intensify the sense of esteem towards the brand (Park et al., 2013, 2016). Thus, practitioners can amplify a brand's enriching benefits through a celebrity endorsement characterized by pronounced enriching benefits, generating a feeling of elevation for the celebrity irrespective of the brand benefits' familiarity to consumers. It is essential for practitioners to contemplate strategies for elevating the sentiment of admiration derived from a celebrity endorser with high enriching benefits. In this regard, when a celebrity possessing significant enriching benefits endorses a product, it would be advisable to emphasize the celebrity by highlighting inspirational stories about the celebrity rather than concentrating on the product itself, in order to bolster the endorsed product's enriching benefits.

5.4. Limitations and future research

The study findings must be viewed in light of their limitations, pointing to promising avenues for future research. First, we could replicate our findings with consumers across different countries. However, we did not study consumers' responses to different brands, such as B2B products, non-profit products, experiential products, and luxury products. Specifically, the levels of product involvement may moderate the effect of celebrities' benefits on brands' benefits. Particularly, the effects of enriching benefits may be influenced by consumers' product category and brand-related involvement. For example, the purchase intention or brand attitude toward high-involvement products such as automobiles, electronic gadgets, and luxury fashion items or even tourism and adventure trips of exploration (say to Spitzbergen or the world's northernmost inhabited areas, visiting the town of Maotai in China's Guizhou province, or a remote, peaceful Alpine chalet) may be affected by inspiring or symbolic images. Thus, future research testing the observed effects across different contexts (e.g., high vs. low

involvement) is richly deserving. Second, we tested elevation as a mediation of benefit transfer from a celebrity with strong enriching benefits to an endorsed brand. Considering admiration is also part of the same other-praising family coming from observing non-moral excellence, future research may explore how elevation interacts with admiration for building stronger consumer-brand relationships in the context of celebrity endorsements. Third, we conducted experiments and collected data in lab settings to establish causality and test the proposed effects. We encourage future work to conduct field studies to strengthen confidence in the generalizability of the current findings.

Moreover, although we study a brand's 3E benefits, additional benefits may exist that endorsers may transfer to a brand. We encourage future research to explore these additional benefits. Fourth, brand endorsers are increasingly employed for digital brands or in a digital context, such as online gaming, shopping, search and social media. Thus, future research may extend the current research to include digital branding contexts such as artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot agents such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's Bard or Microsoft's Bing or other virtual salespeople, which may well serve as a brand's endorser in the years to come.

Funding

This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2019S1A5B5A02047145).

This Research was supported by Sookmyung Women's University Research Cluster Program Grants (3-2303-0006)

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Mina Jun: Supervision, Project administration, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Conceptualization, Writing - original draft. **Jeongsoo Han:** Supervision, Project administration, Methodology, Conceptualization, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing. **Andreas B. Eisingerich:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Zhimin Zhou:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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