

Effect of Celebrity Attractiveness on Behavioral Change Intention: A Study on Celebrity Endorsed Social Advertisement

Tijo Thomas¹ and Johney Johnson²

Abstract

Social Advertising is defined as a form of communication, which is aimed at attracting public attention to the most pressing problems of society. The use of endorsement for the social advertisement is a common phenomenon. The communication and advertising literature have shown that attractiveness of the source influences attitude and intentions of the message recipient. In this context, the study examines the impact of celebrity attractiveness on behavioural intentions. Research participants (N = 116) were selected based on a convenient sampling process, consisting of students from M. G. University, Kottayam. Each of the participants was shown a social advertisement involving a celebrity. They completed a questionnaire that measured the respondent's perception about celebrity's attractiveness and social advertisement persuasion. Path analysis was used to evaluate the hypothesis. The research found out that the attractiveness of celebrity will have an effect on attitude toward advertisement and message comprehension as well as in creating an intention to change behaviour. The research used attractiveness factor for evaluating the celebrity. Other factors like match-up hypothesis, celebrity credibility, are not considered here. The researcher also failed to incorporate the time interval between the respondent viewing the advertisement and filling the questionnaire. The findings of the study suggest that the celebrity attractiveness will affect the intention to change behaviour in a mediated manner.

¹ Research Scholar, School of Management and Business Studies, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Email: tijothomaschal@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor, School of Management and Business Studies, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Email: j.johney@gmail.com

This means the advertisers should consider the celebrity attractiveness before selecting the celebrity for advertising. In earlier studies the impact of celebrity attractiveness is studied using attractiveness relevant product as stimuli but this study uses a social message as stimulus. This is very important for social advertisers who use celebrity endorsement marketing strategy.

Keywords: Celebrity Endorsement, Social Advertisement, Attractiveness, Attitude towards Advertising.

1. Introduction

The importance of using credible source as a spokesperson in a marketing communication strategy has been a widely researched topic for decades. Nowadays most of the advertisements involve an endorsement from a public or a celebrity. Many studies have shown that a celebrity endorser's credibility has a positive impact on consumer attitude toward advertising (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999, Sammanet al., 2009, Shead, et al., 2009). In India most of the advertisement use celebrities. In a study of television commercial (TVC) for the period of 1995-2007, it was found that around 558 TVC featured celebrity in some form (Jain, Roy, Daswani, & Sudha, 2010). The celebrity endorser is defined as any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement (McCracken, 1989). In a press release Mitchell Hughes, Director and CEO of Cork based, Peerless Acquisitions says that "Celebrities are extremely eye-catching, there's an awareness factor that makes you stop and look at a particular advertisement because you recognise the spokesperson or celebrity. The ability of celebrities in attracting customer attention has made it the most favourite advertising strategy among the social marketers.

Social advertising as a part of social marketing serves to introduce behavioural patterns that are considered to be appropriate at this or that period of time. Kotler & Zaltman (1971) define social marketing as "the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify, or abandon a behaviour for the benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole". Social Marketing and Advertising is commonly used in United Kingdom, USA, Australia, Canada and Scandinavian countries, where concepts as fundraising and collaboration between companies and NGO happen every day. In developed countries, this tool has been widely used to promote social changes especially in family planning, public health and HIV/ AIDS. In recent

times, the celebrity endorsement has become a general method of social advertising. In a content analysis of PSAs that aired nationally on U.S. television between 1987 and 1992 the researcher found that 66.4% included one or more celebrities (Dejong & Atkin, 1995). In a study conducted by Samman et al., (2009) it was noted that most of the respondents commented on the credibility of celebrity in endorsing the so called social advertisement. The study also identifies that 30 percentage of respondents cited 'self-promotion' when asked what the celebrity was trying to accomplish'. Many researchers also identify that, unlike a product endorsement the celebrity's interest towards social advertisement varies. The celebrities are more attracted to endorse social advertisement this may be due to media exposure and good public relations that these campaigns can generate (Dejong & Atkin, 1995).

According to Grant McCracken (1989), 'the effectiveness of the endorser depends on the meanings he or she brings to the endorsement processes. According to him, celebrity draws powerful meanings from the roles they assume in their television, movie, military, athletic, and other careers. The study measures how respondent's perception of the celebrity endorser attractiveness affects the respondent's reaction towards the endorsed product.

2. Literature Review

The use of celebrity for promoting products dates back to the late 19th century. One of the early endorsements involving a celebrity was Queen Victoria in association with Cadbury's Cocoa (Erdogan, 1999). In a study conducted by Agrawal & Kamakura, (1995), the effect of celebrity endorsement on economic benefit of the company was measured using the abnormal returns earned after the use of celebrity endorsement and found that the celebrity endorsement created some impact on the share value of the company when the endorsement deal is announced. The impact of celebrity on purchase intentions has been a highly researched topic. Many studies have evaluated the effect of celebrity on advertisement effectiveness and have developed many models for explaining how this strategy creates purchase intention. There are basically four different models to explain how celebrities can create purchase intention among the respondents. They are source credibility model (Ohanian, 1990, Kamins, Brand, Hoeke, & Moe, 1989), source attractiveness model (Kahle & Homer, 1985), match-up hypothesis model (Kamins M. A., 1990), and meaning transfer model (McCracken, 1989). Source credibility model explains how source credibility creates purchase intention. According to Ohanian, (1990) "Source credibility" is commonly used to imply a communicator's positive characteristics that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message. The attractiveness model explains how

the attractiveness of the source creates purchase intention (Erdogan B. Z., 1999). The match –up model explains the role of fit between the brand and the celebrity endorser in creating purchase intention. According to this theory, the fit between celebrity and brand will create purchase intention (DeSarbo & Harshman, 1985). According to Till & Busler, (2000) fit between the celebrity and product is created by physical attractiveness and expertise of the celebrity. The meaning transfer theory explains the process involved in celebrity endorsement. It explains how celebrity endorser creates purchase intention by explaining the process involved as a meaning transfer mechanism (McCracken, 1989). According to this model the endorsement process include three stages. In stage one celebrity draw powerful meanings from the roles they assume in their television, movie, military, athletic, and other careers. In the second stage, advertisement facilitates the transfer of meaning from celebrity to the product. In the third stage, consumer purchases the product because of the cultural meaning attached to it. This study focuses on celebrity attractiveness and its impact on purchase intention.

If people think that someone they admire wants them to do something, they may be motivated to do it, even if the admired person might never know about it (Mills & Aronson, 1965). According to Erdogan, (1999) attractiveness does not mean simply physical attractiveness but includes any number of virtuous characteristics that consumers might perceive in a celebrity endorser like intellectual skills, personality properties, lifestyles, or athletic skill. The effect of attractiveness on communication effectiveness is a widely discussed topic in communication and marketing literature. Mills & Aronson, (1965) in their study evaluating the effect of communicator’s attractiveness in communication effectiveness found that when the communicator is very attractive, an openly stated desire to influence the views of the audience will actually increase the effectiveness of his communication. It shows that an attractive celebrity can create an opinion change by openly stating his desire. According to Miller, (1970) in a first-impression situation, a person’s level of attractiveness may evoke in a perceiver a consistent set of expectancies by a process of trait inference. Snyder & Rothbart, (1971) explains attractiveness effect on advertisement effectiveness as “the pleasure or satisfaction associated with viewing an attractive communicator generalizes to one’s evaluation of his message; attractive faces are distracting, impede counter arguing, and thus facilitate attitude change; and attractive communicators are better liked than unattractive ones and liking leads to greater acceptability of the communicator’s message”. In the study by Chaiken, (1979) the effect of physical attractiveness on persuasion was evaluated in a field setting. The findings revealed that communicator attractiveness affected respondent’s agreement towards the message communicated. In an extensive review of literature in the field of physical attractiveness by Joseph, (1982)he

suggested that physical attractiveness is not particularly important or robust source of interpersonal influence. In a study by Debevecet al., (1986) it was found that attractive models enhance persuasive efficacy, but only in a mediated fashion.

In a study Bower, (2001) hypothesised that a normally attractive model will be more effective than highly attractive model but the researcher failed to empirically prove this hypothesis. In the study by Bower & Landreth (2001), the effectiveness of highly attractive model is compared with the normally attractive model on attractiveness relevant products. The findings suggest that highly attractive models are best associated with enhancing products, but there is no advantage in pairing problem-solving products with highly attractive models instead of normally attractive models. The study also suggests that the model-product match-up influences advertising effectiveness product evaluations through its effect on beliefs about model expertise and not due to any direct effect on product evaluations.

Message comprehension is the overall understanding of the message intended to be delivered by the advertisement, in our case 'the need for energy conservation'. Toncaret al., (2007) suggests that celebrity spokespersons have "stopping power" and using celebrities to deliver a message will result in the audience viewing the message as more relevant, and paying closer attention than if celebrities were not used. Since the audience will be paying closer attention, they are more likely to have a reaction to the message. It seems reasonable to assume that the use of celebrity spokespersons in social advertisement would elicit similar effects. According to Fraser & Brown (2002), the fans develop self-defining relationships with celebrities and seek to adopt their perceived attributes, resulting in powerful forms of personal and social transformation. So we can understand that the celebrity will affect a person attitude or even change his behaviour. The impact of attitude towards advertising campaign on intention to change behaviour is a well discussed topic in marketing research. The studies conducted by Turk, et al., (2012), and Peattie & Peattie, 2009 found a good positive impact of social advertising in changing behaviour. The study by Peattie & Peattie (2009) evaluated the effect of social advertisement in reducing the conception. In the above mentioned study, the researcher used health-oriented social marketing campaign to demonstrate the potential of a social marketing approach to address ingrained forms of consumer behaviour and to successfully 'de-market' products. The study conducted by Turk, et al., 2012, the researcher finds the effect of social marketing in controlling the smokeless tobacco use among the mass using mass media communication. The study not only evaluated the effect of social advertisement but also the impact it generates when mass media is used to propagate it. The study was conducted among the people who

use tobacco products. The study found that the campaign had a positive effect on the population. According to Hassan et al., (2007) responsible thinking is a key component of the advertising persuasion model and that it will fully mediate the effects of comprehension and attitude on intention to quit smoking. As responsible thinking depicts a person's thinking about his own behaviour as a good or bad, this will impact the intention to change the bad behaviour to good one. The understanding of a message can be considered to have a prominent role in propagating an ideology, for example, Kate Smith's effectiveness in selling war time bond over the radio was partially due to the marathon nature of the event and the fact that everyone believed in the cause. From the above discussion, we can posit the following hypotheses

According to Hassan et al.,(2007) comprehension is defined as a unidimensional construct used to assess the amount of correctly attributed meanings from the advertised message. He assessed comprehension through post exposure interviews where respondents were questioned on their identification of the intended meanings. This study also uses the same method for measuring message comprehension. Attitude towards the campaign is measured as a perceived utility of advertisement taking into account the cognitive response which assumes rational information processing by the receiver. Responsible thinking is defined as a person's cognitive elaboration of issue-relevant arguments contained in a persuasive social marketing communication. In this context, responsible thinking recognises that individuals need to reflect on the demerits of their careless energy consumption behaviour before they can conclude that self-correction behaviour such as reducing the use of decorative lights is necessary, in compliance with the social marketing communication. Finally, a central aim of any social marketing campaign is the attainment of audience behavioural compliance. Without a high level of motivation for behavioural change, consequential behavioural compliance is either unlikely to take place or will be short-lived. Therefore, an assessment of the intention to change behaviour, in our case to reduce consumption of electricity, as a consequence of viewing the advertisement is essential to the overall understanding of the persuasion process.

From review of literature, following hypotheses were set for the study

H₁. The celebrity attractiveness will have a positive effect on attitude towards the campaign (AtC).

H₂. The celebrity attractiveness will have a positive effect on message comprehension (MC).

H₃. The celebrity attractiveness will have a positive effect on intention to change behaviour.

H₄. The attitude towards the campaign will have a positive effect on intention to change behaviour.

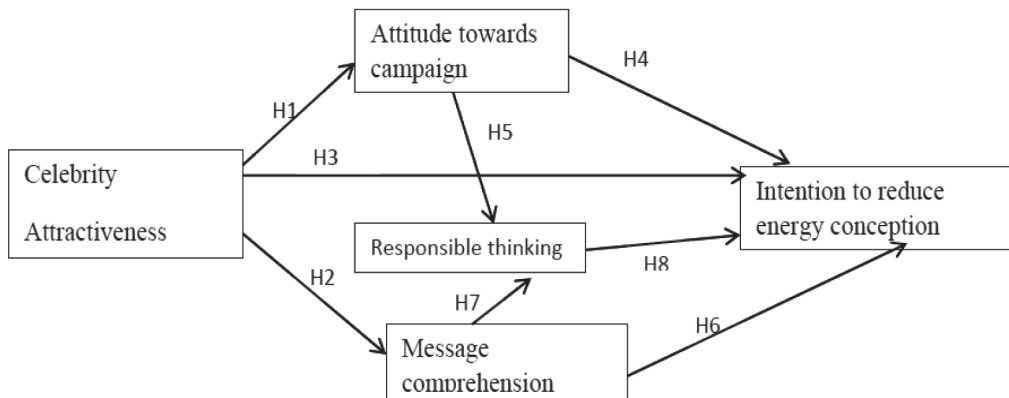
H₅. The attitude towards the campaign will have a positive effect on responsible thinking.

H₆. Message comprehension will have a positive effect on intention to change behaviour.

H₇. Message comprehension will have a positive effect on responsible thinking.

H₈. Responsible thinking will have a positive effect on intention to change behaviour.

Fig. 1: Conceptual Model



3. Methodology

Participants

A hundred students from MG University served as the participants for the study.

Procedure

The participants were shown a television advertisement showing a social cause

(energy conservation) and celebrity endorser (Mohanlal). They were then asked to fill a questionnaire which had nine questions for measuring celebrity attractiveness and effectiveness of the social advertisement. The first section of the questionnaire measured demographic factor of respondents like age and gender. The second section had five six point semantic differential items taken from Ohanian, (1990) to measure celebrity endorsers' attractiveness. The words attractive/ unattractive, classy/ not classy, beautiful/ugly, elegant/plain, and sexy/ not sexy anchored the items measuring attractiveness. The third section measured the effectiveness of social advertisement using 21 statements adopted from social advertising perception scale developed by Hassan *et al.*, (2007). Message comprehension was assessed via seven statements like "There is a need for saving energy", "To solve our state's energy problem, every individual in our society will have to reduce the amount of energy they use" where asked. Consumer attitude toward the campaign was measured via seven items based on a four-point "yes", "definitely" to "no", "not at all" response scale. This included the statements like "The campaign delivers a worthwhile message", "The campaign is an incentive to look for information and/or help". Responsible thinking encompassed statement like "The ad/advertisements made you think about energy problem", "The ad/advertisements made you think about the need for saving electricity" which was measured with five items based on a four-point "yes", "definitely" to "no", "not at all" response scale. This mediator construct captures the extent to which the campaign has led consumers to think responsibly about their smoking. Intention to quit smoking in response to the campaign was measured with two item based on a four-point "yes", "definitely" to "no", "not at all" response scale.

The components measuring the effectiveness of social advertisement i.e. message comprehension, attitude towards advertising; responsible thinking and intention to reduce energy conception are grouped and averaged to evaluate the effectiveness. The respondent's attitude towards endorser and social advertisement is evaluated based on the average scores. The hypotheses were tested using path analysis method in SPSS AMOS.

4. Analysis and Discussion

All the respondents in the study identified the actor and were well aware of the message in the advertisement. The mean score for attractiveness was 3.56 which indicate that the celebrity was considered highly attractive among the audience. The message comprehension showed a mean score of 4.22 which indicated a good understanding of the message among the respondents. The social

advertisement aims at delivering the message to the mass in a fruitful manner. Message comprehensions measure the attitude of respondents towards the content of the social message. This shows that the campaign is successful in delivering the message. The attitude towards the advertising campaign showed a mean score of 3.22 on a 4 point scale indicating a higher attitude towards the advertising campaign. The attitude measured how the respondents view the advertisement as a stimulus for changing behaviour and looking for more information. Measured on a 4 point scale the responsible thinking showed a high positive score of 3.37. Responsible thinking measured the respondents thinking about the message after seeing the advertisement. This shows that the social cause is relevant and important for the populace. Every social advertisement's success is measured in terms of intention to change one's own behaviour. So the intention to change behaviour was measured on a four point scale and scored a mean of 3.05 which showed that the advertisement was a success in terms of delivering the message and creating behavioural intentions. The hypothesised paths which represent the relationship between these variables are tested using path analysis method.

Table 1: Table Showing Mean Scores

Variables	Mean	SD
Celebrity attractiveness	3.5586	0.66595
Message comprehension	4.2258	0.39243
Attitude towards advertisement campaign	3.2167	0.42898
Responsible thinking	3.3724	0.42274
Intention to change behaviour	3.0517	0.70827

Source: Survey.

4.1 Model Testing

From the literature review a model, was developed and path analysis was used for testing the model. According to the model, the attractiveness was hypothesised as creating message comprehension, attitude towards advertising campaign and intention to change behaviours which are themselves correlated in a causal order identical to that shown by Louise M. Hassan (2007). The path analysis resulted in an Chi-Square of 2.763 ($P = .251$), GFI of .990, an AGFI of 0.929, a normed fit index of 0.981, a comparative fit index of 0.994. The model's fit as indicated by these indices was deemed satisfactory; thus, it provides a good basis for testing the hypothesised paths.

Table 2: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Hypothesized Path	Estimate	C.R.	Result
1	Attitude towards advertisement campaign ←— Celebrity attractiveness	.299	5.629***	Supported
2	Message comprehension ←— Celebrity attractiveness	.155	2.923 **	Supported
3	Intention to change behaviour ←— Celebrity attractiveness	.189	2.149	Not Supported
4	Intention to change behaviour ←— Attitude towards advertisement campaign	.668	4.525 ***	Supported
5	Responsible thinking ←— Attitude towards advertisement campaign	.451	5.858 ***	Supported
6	Intention to change behaviour ←— Message comprehension	-.470	-3.417 ***	Supported
7	Responsible thinking ←— Message comprehension	.451	5.858 **	Supported
8	Intention to change behaviour ←— Responsible thinking	.437	3.054 **	Supported

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Source: Survey.

Hypothesis one posited a positive relationship between celebrity endorser attractiveness and attitude toward the advertisement campaign. Specifically, it was assumed that the perception of celebrity endorser's attractiveness will affect the respondent's attitude towards advertisement. As shown in table two, the estimated value for this hypothesis was 0.299 with a critical ratio of 5.629 ($P < 0.001$) indicating a change in attitude towards advertisement campaign when higher attractive endorser is used in the advertisement. This is in accordance with the earlier studies in the field of celebrity attractiveness (Bower & Landreth 2001).

Hypothesis two predicted a positive relationship between celebrity attractiveness and message comprehension. It means that when attractiveness of the celebrities more, then the understanding of the social message will be higher. The celebrity used in this study is a local celebrity well known for his acting. As suggested by Toncar, Reid, & Anderson, (2007) using local celebrity will encourage or facilitate the processing of the message. As it can be seen from the table two the estimated value for the hypothesis is .155 with a critical ratio of 2.923 ($p < 0.01$) indicating a positive change.

Hypothesis three suggested a positive relationship between celebrity attractiveness and intention to change behaviour. Specifically, it suggested that when an attractive celebrity is used in an advertisement the viewers will change their behaviour. The analysis does not support this hypothesis. The regression estimation for this hypothesis is 0.189 and the critical ratio is 2.149 indicating a minor change in the intention to change behaviour when attractiveness of endorser changes but was not statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ level.

Hypothesis four predicted a positive relationship between attitude towards advertising and intention to change behaviour, which means that when attitude towards advertisement is high the chance of intention to change behaviour will also increase. This hypothesis was supported at $P < 0.001$. This indicates that attitude towards advertising will affect the respondents intention to change the behaviour. By viewing the earlier finding regarding hypothesis one and two it can be said that the effect of celebrity endorser attractiveness is mediated by the attitude towards advertisement. Specifically, it suggests that when an attractive celebrity is used in the advertisement, the viewers will have a positive attitude towards advertisement which will, in turn, create an intention to change the behaviour as advised by the celebrity. As it can be seen from table two the estimated value of the hypothesised path is .668 with a critical ratio of 4.525. This is in accordance with the existing marketing theories that attitude toward advertising will affect the intention to change behaviour. Hypothesis five predicted the relation of attitude toward advertising and reasonable thinking. As it can be seen from table 2, the hypothesis was supported at a $P < 0.001$ indicating a positive relation between these two variables. The estimated value for this hypothesis is .451 with a critical ratio of 5.858. As suggested by Hassan *et al.*, (2007) the attitude towards advertising will affect reasonable thinking of the respondents. From both these hypotheses, we can find that attitude towards advertising will have more effect on intention to change behaviour (.668) than responsible thinking (.451). The hypothesised path H6 showing a relationship between message comprehension and intention to change behaviour was tested negative at $p < 0.001$. As it can be seen in table two, the estimates were found to

be -.470 at a critical ratio of -3.417 indicating a negative relationship. This negative relation was also found in the study done by Louise M. Hassan on European Union's anti-smoking advertisement in which the hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that when the respondents are able to understand the message more the intention to change the behaviour is less. This is against our hypothesis that when the message is more understood the chance of behavioural change is high.

Hypothesis seven predicting a relation between message comprehension and responsible thinking has found to be supported at $P < 0.01$ level. As shown in table two, the estimated value for the same was .451 indicating a positive relationship between the variables. Even though message comprehension shows a negative relationship towards the intention to change behaviour, it positively affects responsible thinking. Hypothesis eight which predicts a positive relationship between responsible thinking and intention to change behaviour was supported at $p < 0.01$. The critical ratio for this hypothesis was 3.054 with an estimate of .437 .

From the model testing, it can be found that the celebrity attractiveness has got an influence on behavioural intentions. Those who perceive celebrity to be more attractive will try to change their behaviour to suit the celebrity. From path analysis, we can also conclude that the influence of celebrity attractiveness on behavioural intention is mediated by the attitude towards the campaign. It means that the attractiveness of celebrity will create a positive attitude towards advertisement which will create a positive change in behaviour advocated.

5. Discussion

The present study evaluated the effect of celebrity attractiveness on purchase intention. The study proposes that when a celebrity is perceived as attractive then the person's intention to change behaviour will be high. The hypothesis was tested using path analysis method. The test results indicated that celebrity attractiveness will create an intention to change behaviour in a mediated manner. This indicates that when the advertisers take a decision about the celebrity they should try to get a celebrity who is attractive among the target audience.

It is also noteworthy that the study found that the effect of celebrity endorser attractiveness is mediated by the attitude towards advertisement. This is in line with the earlier findings of Lafferty, Goldsmith, & Newell, (2002) which indicated a mediating role of celebrity credibility in creating purchase intention. This

finding is important for social advertisers who are interested in using celebrity endorsement marketing strategy. These findings suggest that when a social advertiser is using celebrity endorsement it is important for him to see the attractiveness of the celebrity among the target audience.

Another important finding of the study is that the message comprehension has a negative relationship with intention to change the behaviour. Specifically, it suggests that when the respondents have more positive attitude towards the message then the chances of changing the behaviour is less. This was also found in the study of Hassan, *et al.*, (2007) but failed to statistically validate. This negative relationship can be attributed to the respondents prior opinion which is not studied in both the studies. That if the respondents feel that they know about the message and does not have to change their behaviour because they already have the intended behaviour then this message will not create much impact.

6. Implications of the Research

The findings of the study had a greater implication to marketers using celebrity endorsement strategy. The study suggests that the use of attractive celebrities can create a positive response towards advertising and message as well as can create a change in the behaviour among the respondents. It indicates that the advertisers should try to use more attractive celebrities in their advertisement to gain more behavioural change.

Another important implication of the study is that the celebrity endorser's attractiveness does not directly affect the intention instead it affects the attitude towards advertisement which effects intention. This is in accordance with ELM theory which suggested a mediated effect of celebrity in advertising effectiveness (Petty *et al.*, 1983).

7. Limitation of the Study

The study was carried out using direct interview method with respondents intercepted at M G University, Kottayam and shown an advertisement. The selection of location and respondents were made based on non-probability sampling technique which reduces the generality of the study. Future research can replicate the study in a more realistic environment. The basic aim of the study was to understand the effect of consumer perception about celebrity attractiveness on intention to change behaviour. So the study was carried out using one celebrity (Mohanlal) in a more realistic environment. The

manipulation like high versus low which were used in the earlier literature (like Bower & Landreth, 2001) is not done in this study. The future studies can evaluate these manipulations. The study only takes into account the attractiveness factor of celebrity and its effect on the respondents the other factor like thematch-up between celebrity and the cause and credibility are not considered here. In past study, the effect of time and involvement was considered important factor influencing a communication. This study does not consider this factor so future studies can be undertaken to incorporate these factors.

The behavioural change intended here is conservation of energy where consumer addiction is considered to be less; there are many other big problems like smoking, alcoholism and much more where the consumer addiction is higher. The generalisation of this finding to those advertisements should be done with cautious.

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