A-List Encoding: Does Celebrity Recognition Create a Brand Memory Advantage?

Chandler Meakins[a]*, Jenni Romaniuk, Cathy Nguyen and Imogen Lee

Chandler.Meakins@MarketingScience.info

[a]Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, Adelaide University, Australia

Notes on contributors

Chandler Meakins is a researcher at the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute at Adelaide University. Chandler's research is focused on celebrity endorsements and the effectiveness of advertising brands in the same portfolio. *ORCID: 0000-0003-3818-5162*

Jenni Romaniuk is a Research Professor and Associate Director at the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute. Jenni's expertise spans mental and physical availability, brand equity, brand health tracking, word-of-mouth and advertising effectiveness. *ORCID: 0000-0002-5774-1390*

Cathy Nguyen is a Senior Research Fellow at the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute at Adelaide University. Her primary areas of expertise are co-advertising effectiveness and cause-related/charity marketing. *ORCID: 0000-0002-1732-8307*

Imogen Lee is a researcher at the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute at Adelaide University. Her primary area of research focuses on the effectiveness of advertising. *ORCID: 0000-0002-6979-2697*

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Abstract

In today's fragmented media environment, people can be famous in narrow domains and known only to segments of the population. Drawing on Associative Network Theories, this study examines whether celebrity knowledge increases the likelihood of encoding the brand a celebrity endorses. In a study of 677 consumers, participants viewed celebrity headshots and elicited names, brands and other information. The findings show a network facilitation effect, larger associative networks increase the chance the brand is encoded. On average, 39% could recall a celebrity's name, but name retrieval meant significantly higher chance the brand name was elicited. Further, greater celebrity knowledge increased the chance of endorsed brand elicitation. Even the presence of other brands was linked to greater presence of any specific endorsed brand. The findings highlight the role of celebrity recognition in driving brand endorsement memory and suggest that widely known celebrities are more effective endorsers than those with narrower recognition.

Keywords: Celebrity endorsement, Celebrity recognition, Brand memory, Advertising effectiveness