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# Effective Celebrity Endorsers: What Are the Rhetorical Factors?

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EFFECTIVE CELEBRITY ENDORSERS:  
WHAT ARE THE RHETORICAL FACTORS?

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
Professional Communication

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by  
Christa Kettlewell  
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## ABSTRACT

Celebrity endorsements are a common technique used in advertising. While many have studied this marketing tool and its effectiveness, a gap remains in the research regarding overall effectiveness in celebrity choice and advertisement composition in terms of rhetoric. Oftentimes, there is an assumption that celebrity endorsers hold the most power in creating purchase intentions, yet concepts related to rhetoric suggest that other elements play an active role in this as well. Consequently, this study adds to the conversation of celebrity endorsements by examining five beauty advertisements that utilize celebrity endorsements to better understand their overall visual rhetoric and, thus, how they persuade consumers. Links are made to persuasiveness in terms of identity, credibility, design, and branding. The findings suggest that effectiveness cannot just be associated with a single element; rather, it is a conglomeration of rhetorical appeals—visual rhetoric, credibility/trust, and coherence. Implications are also discussed in terms of how pinpointing the agent in an advertisement can provide specialists in the field with the necessary tools to more effectively persuade consumers and better market their products.

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## Introduction

“One of the most important factors determining the effectiveness of persuasion is the identity of the *agent*. Who or what is trying to change my mind? is a question that operates consciously or unconsciously in every instance of persuasion” (Covino, 1998, p. 4). For celebrity-endorsed advertisements, we often assume that the agent is the celebrity—that that is the only element within the advertisement working to persuade us. While the factors that persuade an audience can never be narrowed down to one effective factor, it is evident that what is effective goes beyond the celebrity pictured; rather, what is effective is deeply embedded in the overall visual rhetoric of the advertisement. To better determine what the rhetorical factors are that make a celebrity endorsement effective, it must first be understood what consumers’ associations and attitudes toward celebrities are—how they identify—in addition to what they view to be visually persuasive—all of which connect to the intentional choices of organizations.

As a whole, organizations choose celebrity endorsers based on whom they think will be the most effective in selling their product; however, it is still the consumer who is buying the product and, thus, the more important component in deciding how he or she will be persuaded to purchase. Nevertheless, consumers continue to buy a variety of products endorsed by celebrities. Therefore, this study works to pinpoint what the rhetorical factors are, visual or otherwise, that make celebrity endorsed advertisements the most effective through the examination of numerous beauty advertisements. Whether it is knowledge of celebrity, the composition of the advertisement itself, how consumers identify with the celebrity in addition to other rhetorical elements, the data collected

throughout this study works to clearly identify what rhetorical factors continue to make this marketing strategy highly utilized. In doing so, this study will work to demonstrate to marketing specialists as well as consumers the need to potentially rethink the power celebrity endorsers hold in advertisements; instead, focus should be shifted toward the power other rhetorical factors have in advertisements and how these can be better employed. Identifying these rhetorical factors will not only allow advertisers and marketers to create content that is even more persuasive to consumers, but, instead, it will allow us to more thoroughly answer the question of “who or what is trying to change my mind” (Covino, 1998, p. 4). Because in the case of celebrity endorsements, there is a clear need to identify the agent.

## **Literature Review**

### *Rhetoric*

“Aristotle understands that all persuasion involves interpretive constructions of presented material and that the same presentation can lead to different kinds of conclusions from different audiences...the power of persuasion relies on the interaction of ethos (the character of the speaker), pathos (the emotions and state of mind of the audience), and logos (the content)” (Covino, 1998, p. 6). Working to better understand the power of celebrity endorsements in advertisements relies on the understanding of each of these rhetorical principles. When we are persuaded, we have made a decision based upon how ethos, pathos, and logos have worked together; a conclusion has been drawn based upon a variety of visual and textual rhetorical elements (Covino, 1998, p. 18). In order to have effective ethos, the author or in the case of advertisements the



celebrity endorser needs to convey a level of practical sense, morality, and goodwill; additionally, when ethos and pathos work together, they are “materialized in the logos, or what we may call the text” (Covino 1998, p. 7-10). In different terms, ethos and pathos produce the force to act, and logos provides the potential means that are necessary for action (Katz, 1992, p. 259). Ultimately, while a myriad of elements can produce effective ethos, pathos, and logos, it is understanding how these work together in advertisements that will better help us answer the question of how we are being persuaded.

Still though, issues arise when we are clearly aware that we are being manipulated, as is often the case with celebrity endorsed advertising. Out of the three purposes of communication—to teach, to please, and to move—one could assume that advertising only falls into the category of to move; however, there is also an element of teaching involved (Covino, 1998, p. 92). Referring back to ethos, our awareness is heightened in regard to the measures being taken to move or to sell us something; if we are able to easily pick up on the emphasis placed on the need to act, the need to purchase, we often begin to question the credibility or ethos. In general, we are simply able to detect that there is a lack of benevolence on the part of the celebrity endorser (Covino, 1998, p. 114). On the other hand, though, we must address how advertisements and celebrity endorsers work to teach as well.

Though not always the case, celebrity endorsers are meant to represent the truth whether that truth is about the use of the advertised product or whether the truth is about honesty in whatever platform or media they participate. Previous research indicates that persuasion is effective if teachers are featured as “uniquely qualified and authoritative, as

people who tell the truth” (Covino, 1998, p. 119). These teachers can also be classified as the speaker in rhetoric; as Plato explains, the speaker should know a semblance of the truth or what “seems to be true” in order to persuade (p. 156). Celebrities are chosen to be in advertisements because they are deemed “qualified and authoritative” in the products that they are promoting. Because of this, the audience or the consumer often buys in to the fact that it is worth learning or worth purchasing what is being shared with them because of the authoritative individual, the celebrity teacher in the advertisement (Covino, 1998, p. 119). Choosing an effective authoritative figure emphasizes how ethos, pathos, and logos will successfully work together in addition to, thus, giving the consumer a greater reason to be persuaded.

Moving beyond the standard elements that make up rhetoric—ethos, pathos, and logos—there must also be a level of identification in order to be persuaded; individuals must see some aspect of themselves in the advertisement they are being persuaded by or some version of their reality. Even though identifying with a person or a particular product does involve a level of pathos, identity in some senses functions on its own in regard to persuasion. Again referring to the ideas of Aristotle, there needs to be desires and values as well as expectations that create the mindset of an audience (Covino, 1998, p. 43). Furthering this idea, modern theorist, Chaim Perelman, claims that “[t]o adapt to an audience is, above all, to choose as premises of argumentation theses the audience already holds” (qtd. in Covino, 1998, p. 43). Before an audience or, in the case of advertising the consumer, can be persuaded, they must possess similar assertions to those being shared within the advertisement. Cheney (1983) adds to the idea of shared values

through the discussion of consubstantiality: here, there is a level of overlap based on reality or perception between multiple individuals or individuals and a group or organization that creates a commonality of action as well as a shared viewpoint (p. 146).

Nevertheless, identification is additionally established by means of similar interests and beliefs. Whether it is similar backgrounds or similar biases or even just “a common desire,” consumers can be persuaded based upon identification with these attributes. There is a level of approval toward statements that correlate with our own (Covino, 1998, p. 68). More simply stated, there is a basis of self-interest (Covino, 1998, p. 75 & 79). In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke (1969) claims that identification can be defined in the following manner: “A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so” (Burke, 1969, p. 20; qtd. in Covino, 1998, p. 79). Here, Burke makes it clear that there does not have to be a definitive connection between interests as long as one individual assumes there is. Once this assumption is made, persuasion is more achievable. Similarly, Cheney (1983) claims that identification occurs when a link is established between rhetor and audience in an explicit manner to suggest that “I am like you’ or ‘I have the same interests as you” (p. 147). Again, as long as there is a link, whether assumed or actual, identification is likely to occur.

Relating to Burke’s idea that identity can solely be established internally, there is also evidence to suggest that we as consumers are the lone decision makers in establishing identity, which would suggest that there is no level of subconscious

identification. Though this still requires recognition and relation of our backgrounds and beliefs, it would suggest that this is a constant internal process (Covino, 1998, p. 70). Just as we can assume a connection exists, we can also invent individual reasoning as to why we identify with what we are being shown in an advertisement; at the same time, if there is something we deliberately do not want to identify with, reasoning can just as easily be established for not identifying (Covino, 1998, p. 71). However, we must still recognize the more subconscious identification that occurs: “What makes visual messaging influential...is not any argumentative function, but the unconscious identification they evoke” (Blair, 1996, p. 34). All in all, though, whether it is deliberate or subconscious, choosing how to identify or if identification exists is a key rhetorical element for persuasion.

How one identifies with his or her reality is also important. Yes, this reality would correspond with beliefs, biases, and backgrounds, yet it would also include vocabularies. Burke (1945) examines vocabulary in terms of scope with scope meaning “how inclusive a term is”: “People seek vocabularies that will be faithful reflections of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are selections of reality. And any selection of reality must, in certain circumstances, function as a deflection of reality. Insofar as the vocabulary meets the needs of the reflection, we can say that it has the necessary scope.” (Burke, 1945, p. 59; qtd. in Covino 1998, 53-54). Exemplifying this is the term “love.” Not only is this a term that anyone can define in terms of individual experiences, but it is also a use of vocabulary that is quite inclusive (Covino, 1998, p. 99). Therefore, because of this inclusivity, we can identify with terms like ‘love’ whether they are directly used in

a visual text or whether the feelings associated with different vocabulary are simply being emitted in the advertisement. Ultimately, terms that have an effective scope allow us to identify because there is that established connection to our reality—a reality that is comprised of our differing beliefs, biases, and backgrounds.

Identification not only results from a connection to the celebrity, product pictured, or terminology, but it also results from a correlation between oneself and the composition or form of the advertisement. In today's society, because of the reliance on and impact of technology, there is often a higher level of persuasion based on how effectively and uniquely the technology is used to create the visually appealing advertisement. As we become more persuaded by the technology—the software and techniques used to create an appealing design—we are also becoming more dependent on the value of technology—that is there is a greater likelihood of being persuaded by an advertisement's design that showcases a strong manipulation of technology because we find greater value in it (Covino, 1998, p. 99). This use of technology has also increased the value we place on multimodal texts like advertisements that use images, texts, and other elements to communicate. In this manner, meaning is developed in how the elements of the composition interact and impact one another; this interaction is based upon the placement of elements in relation to their value (information value), how elements attract one's attention through size, value, and sharpness (salience), and whether elements are connected or disconnected through frames (framing)(Kress & vanLeeuwen, 2006, p. 181-183).

Being impacted by the visual rhetoric of an advertisement also has a foundation in its level of form. Generally speaking, form relates to how coherent a text is (Covino, 1998, p. 102). For advertising, coherence is centered on the unification of design, product, and, if applicable, celebrity endorser. In *Counter Statement*, Burke (1968) states that “Form...is an arousing fulfillment of desires. A work has form in so far as one part of it leads a reader [or in our case, a viewer] to anticipate another part, to be gratified by the sequence” (Burke, 1968, p. 124; qtd. in Covino, 1998, p. 102). Similarly, artists, graphic designers, or advertising specialists often work “to send a message and to evoke a reaction...these artists are inviting us to ponder, or to agree with, their statements. They will us to feel or identify” (Blair, 1996, p. 28). Oftentimes, this reaction or gratification is evident in advertising if a consumer purchases the product; if his or her desires are fulfilled by the coherence of the advertisement, the intent to purchase is significant—a goal that many marketing specialists strive for.

### *Marketing*

With the use of celebrity endorsers being rather prevalent in the advertising industry, there has been a variety of research established dealing with this technique. Just as there is a need for rhetorical devices to create identity, marketing experts also recognize how identity works in successful promotional campaigns. Ultimately, claims suggest that identity connects to how consumers interact with a brand. For brands to establish this identity, consistency must be apparent between the brand and the consumer; if a consumer views a celebrity endorser as having a similar self-image, consumers identify with the brand and the celebrity because part of the process of persuasion

requires a constant flow of incorporating branding characteristics into the self (Choi and Riffon, 2012, p. 641; Mukherjee, 2009, p. 1).

For many, this process of identification is referred to as the constructed self: “The constructed self makes the celebrity a kind of exemplary, inspirational figure to the consumer...[Celebrities] are compelling partners to meaning transfer process because they demonstrate so vividly the process by which these meanings can be assembled and some of the novel shapes into which they can be assembled” (McCracken, 1989, p. 317-318). Here, there is the implication that celebrities are the final step in the process of meaning transfer that creates identity. While advertisements can create identity through the brand or the product, having a celebrity endorser more efficiently enables meaning transfer or identification because this offers an idealized individual to more actively relate to.

Trust and credibility are also elements that advertisers research in terms of how effective celebrity endorsers are; however, each of these corresponds with rhetoric in that trust and credibility are part of ethos. More specifically, one of the key factors that make it clear as to why celebrity endorsements are utilized in advertising is that utilizing a well-known celebrity endorser provides reassurance for customers in terms of product quality; there is an association between brands that use celebrity endorsers and high quality (Elberse and Verleun, 2012, p. 151). In a similar manner, there has been previous research conducted regarding how consumers can view products endorsed by celebrities more approvingly. If a consumer infers a level of trust in that the celebrity actually uses the product, there is a greater likelihood of purchasing. Ultimately, this demonstrates that

marketing specialists should choose celebrity endorsers that correlate with product being advertised as well as being a reliable endorser (Silvera and Austad, 2003, p. 1521-1524).

Along with trust, consumers must also be able to feel as though a connection exists with the brand and celebrity; furthermore, a positive brand experience enables consumers to be more willing to include a particular brand within their lifestyle.

Nevertheless, producing a positive brand experience requires organizations to correctly manage “attitude toward the brand name, connectedness to celebrity endorser, visual imaging (as associated with the brand itself), and message fit” (Roswinanto and Strutton, 2014, p. 622-23). One example of this connection can be demonstrated through how celebrities use social media

“to build trustworthiness via several means of communication with their fans.

Nowadays, the social media environment provides plenty of communication opportunities because fans can directly interact with their favorite athletes, read about their opinion on a topic, and watch pictures posted. Moreover, athletes are able to receive feedback from their fans and correct their communication approach in order to improve their profile.” (Tzoumaka et al, 2014, p. 15).

Consequently, not only can experts use social media as a way of selecting viable endorsers, but they can also use this platform as a way to maintain the connection that needs to exist between consumers, the brand, and the overall advertisement. Blair (1996) also addresses this by stating that advertising has traditionally been used as a way for viewers to feel good about the advertisement, identify with the contents of the advertisement, and then transfer those feelings to the brand producing the advertisement



(p. 31-32). Ultimately, though marketing specialists have studied celebrity endorsed advertisements and determined that coherence between all elements in the advertisement need to exist, for only in these situations can connectedness be created and maintained—a connectedness that effectively leads to persuasion.

## **Methodology**

### *Data Collection*

For this study, data regarding celebrity endorsements in advertisements was collected by means of a Google form. Within this form, participants were asked to answer questions based on the following task: You are looking for new beauty products for an upcoming event. As you flip through a magazine to find ideas, you discover numerous beauty advertisements that use celebrity endorsers. With this in mind, please answer the following questions for each advertisement in as much detail as possible. The goal of providing participants with this task was to place them in the mindset of a determined consumer—one who needs to fulfill a need. Covino (1998) shares why creating a need is important: “how an individual’s biases and needs figure into the logic of self-persuasion, support an important fact about persuasion in general: Persuasion is a consequence of desire” (p. 74). This in turn provided better data in terms of drawing conclusions for how rhetorical factors impact the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements because participants were in the mindset of wanting to fulfill a desire.

In addition to a task, participants were required to answer questions about five advertisements that included different celebrities as well as different compositional layouts yet were still advertising beauty products. Choosing to only use advertisements

promoting beauty products was simply due to the fact that this industry frequently uses celebrity endorsers in their advertisements. Not only did the required questions ask about identifying the celebrity, trusting the celebrity, and feelings about the celebrity, but the questions also worked to pinpoint what it was about the layout of the advertisements that made them effective; this was accomplished by asking participants how visual elements impacted the celebrities' credibility as well as how the celebrities impact the perception of the advertisement and how they connect to the design and content. Finally, participants were asked two follow up questions regarding the most and least successful advertisement.

In choosing participants for this study, I focused on female Millennials. Millennials, the generation born between 1982 and 2005, thrives on technology and popular culture (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p. 45 & 50). Winograd and Hais (2011) note that "the use of social media has made the daily lives and thoughts of stars vastly more accessible to their fans than in previous eras. For these reasons, the arrival of Millennial celebrities on America's pop culture scene will reinforce the considerable power the generation's attitudes wield in shaping the zeitgeist of America in the twenty-first century" (p. 224). Because popular culture is working to shape the ideals of America, this generation often identifies with the thoughts and actions of celebrities. Because of this, this demographic has knowledge of the products being used as well as a level of familiarity with the celebrity endorsers, which in turn provided better results about how rhetorical factors influence the effectiveness of advertisements. Because the example advertisements used were associated with the beauty industry, it is more likely that

females are able to recognize the celebrities and, thus, are better able to assess their credibility. Choosing Millennials provided a broad age range, yet this range provided a greater knowledge of past and current celebrities that are often used in advertisements. With this in mind, beauty advertisements are used to capture the attention of a wide audience; products not only target those working to prevent wrinkles, but they also target individuals who simply want a new shade of lipstick. Therefore, because beauty products have a wide assortment of uses, it was necessary to choose an age demographic of individuals who use the variety of products offered, making Millennials a valid choice

Ultimately, eight participants were selected to complete the questions in the Google form. These participants were selected from a population of individuals associated with Clemson University as well as individuals in Northeast Ohio. By collecting participants from differing areas, I was able to collect more diverse subjects while still remaining within the boundary of female Millennials.

#### *Data Analysis*

Upon analysis of the data, I examined each advertisement as an individual unit. Each advertisement was associated with five questions; at the same time, I examined the follow up questions as an individual unit as well. Following this, participants' responses were analyzed by question through the use of a rubric (Appendix A). Using a rubric enabled me to be more open to the variety of responses collected and, consequently, better understand the data. This rubric classified responses through the identification of key themes in order to convey the similarities and differences between responses as well as reveal the most significant premises. Furthermore, these criteria enabled me to better

see how effective or in effective the celebrity endorsements were. These themes included level of trust, celebrity identification, perception of celebrity, ethos of design, cohesiveness among different elements of the advertisement, and power of the celebrity. After classifying the responses within the rubric, I was able to make connections between responses for the five advertisements, therefore, allowing me to draw solid conclusions about how rhetorical elements impact the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements. All in all, this form of assessment enabled me to draw conclusions based upon how my participants made meaning of rhetoric’s function in advertising.

### **Findings**

Overall effectiveness of the example advertisements was clearly conveyed through the results collected from the rubric. Table 1 demonstrates the rating assigned to each response from each participant in correlation with the respective criteria. Additionally, averages for each advertisement were calculated in order to determine level of effectiveness. While the highest score possible would be 18, the lowest would be 6; thus, it is evident that these advertisements align with success or moderate success.

Table 1.1 Participant Evaluations of Advertisements

	<b>Advertisement 1 (Beyoncé)</b>	<b>Advertisement 2 (Ellen DeGeneres)</b>	<b>Advertisement 3 (Selena Gomez)</b>	<b>Advertisement 4 (Jennifer Aniston)</b>	<b>Advertisement 5 (Emma Stone)</b>
<b>Participant 1</b>	3,2,1,3,3,3=15	3,3,2,1,3,3=15	3,2,2,2,3,3=15	3,3,3,3,3,3=18	3,1,2,1,2,1=10
<b>Participant 2</b>	3,2,3,2,3,3=16	3,3,3,3,3,3=18	3,3,3,3,3,3=18	3,3,3,3,3,3=18	3,3,1,2,3,1=13
<b>Participant 3</b>	3,3,2,3,2,3=16	3,3,2,2,1,3=14	3,3,2,3,3,3=17	3,3,3,3,2,3=17	3,2,2,3,3,3=16
<b>Participant 4</b>	3,1,1,2,3,3=13	3,3,3,2,2,3=16	3,3,3,3,3,3=18	3,3,3,3,3,3=18	3,2,3,2,1,1=12
<b>Participant 5</b>	3,3,2,3,3,3=17	3,3,2,3,3,3=17	3,2,2,3,3,3=16	3,3,2,1,1,3=13	2,2,1,1,3,1=10
<b>Participant 6</b>	3,3,1,1,3,3=14	3,3,3,3,3,3=18	3,1,1,1,1,3=10	3,2,1,3,3,3=15	3,3,3,3,3,1=17
<b>Participant 7</b>	3,3,3,3,1,3=16	3,3,3,3,3,3=18	3,2,3,2,3,1=14	3,2,2,2,2,3=14	2,2,2,2,2,2=12
<b>Participant 8</b>	3,1,2,1,2,1=10	3,3,3,3,3,3=18	3,3,2,2,3,3=16	3,3,3,2,3,3=17	1,2,2,1,2,1=9
<b>Participant Average</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>16.75</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>16.25</b>	<b>12.4</b>

Through the assessments conveyed, it is clear that there was often discrepancy between how participants felt about the effectiveness of the advertisements. Advertisement 5, for example, received the lowest evaluation based on numerous factors such as the celebrity possessing little power, lack of cohesiveness, and the design lacked credibility.

Conversely, Advertisement 2 received the highest evaluation because there was a positive perception of the celebrity; the celebrity held great power; the advertisement was cohesive, and the design was credible. Nevertheless, these overall evaluations in terms of effectiveness only provide a partial representation of how the participants felt about the advertisements because of the variety of opinions represented. Consequently, it is necessary to examine the individual responses from participants to better understand how they identify in addition to their more specific evaluations.

As was the case with every advertisement, participants were first asked to identify the celebrity pictured. For Figure 1.1, all participants were able to identify Beyonce Knowles; however, while everyone was able to identify her, there was a wide range of feelings about this celebrity. From bold and confident to dislike of how she portrays herself, feelings about this celebrity impacted later responses.



Figure 1.1: Beyonce Knowles for L'Oreal True Match Foundation (c) *Allure*, March 2012

Exemplifying this is how much trust participants have in this celebrity. Two out of the eight respondents felt that this advertisement allowed them to trust her more because there was a level of believability that she used the product; at the same time, three participants concluded that this advertisement made them trust her less; the other participants felt no change in trust. When discussing design, there was an overarching theme regarding simplicity and coherence. Because this advertisement promoted foundation, many respondents found that the simple colors and layout were cohesive with the product as well as the celebrity because they highlighted attributes of both the product and celebrity, which aided in developing credibility. Because the natural effect of the product correlates with the natural beauty of the celebrity, participants were also able to better identify with her. This ability to identify captured the attention of participants and made them want to look at the advertisement. Nevertheless, there were still responses suggesting that the celebrity had no power over the perception of the advertisement and was at times even holding the product back. This more negative conclusion relates to the idea that celebrities of varying ethnicities could be used to actually signify that this product is for any skin tone; furthermore, some participants wanted more of a review from the celebrity instead of just the endorsement.

Figure 2.1 provided similar results, yet there were also some discrepancies. Five out eight participants felt as though this advertisement made them trust Ellen DeGeneres more while the other three felt no change in trust; furthermore, seven participants felt there was strong correlation between content, advertisement design, and celebrity choice.



**Figure 2.1: Ellen DeGeneres for Olay and CoverGirl Foundation (c) *Allure*, April 2013**

These more positive results relate to how participants perceived Ellen: funny, honest, positive, trustworthy, and a role model. This level of trustworthiness and honesty allowed participants to believe she actually uses the product. Additionally, participants found the color, layout, and overall visual design cohesive to the brand and the celebrity. The advertisement was described as being simple and clean yet also whimsical and fun; ultimately, this design was cohesive to the brand and celebrity, making both more credible. As one participant shared, “The colors, layout, and visual design are very simplistic, drawing your focus to the product and the celebrity, which makes it seem like the celebrity is credible because they aren’t drawing you in to an advertisement that is providing you with too many details as a distraction.” All in all, Ellen’s positive and amusing demeanor give her power and create a desire to identify.

Coherence was again a main theme in the analysis of responses to Figure 3.1. Seven of the eight participants found that there was a clear connection between content, advertisement design, and celebrity choice. Not only was there emphasis on Selena Gomez's beautiful hair and confident, strong personality in relation to the advertisement, but there was also focus on the fact that this is how she portrays herself to the public, too.



Figure 3.1: Selena Gomez for Pantene Pro-V Products (c) *Vogue*, August 2015

However, it is worth noting that four of the eight participants were neutral or negative about their feelings toward this celebrity as well as their level of trust toward her. This negativity was also reflected in some responses to layout, yet overall, respondents again recognized the cohesiveness:



“I love this ad. I think the color scheme works really well and Selena has awesome hair so that definitely gives more credibility to Pantene. The layout is good. Though my attention is grabbed by Selena’s ponytail and her smile, I am definitely impacted by the bottles around her and the ‘Pro-V’ vitamins. The mood is very pure and confident. The overall visual design is very appealing. I like the symmetry and color scheme as well as the white space. Very credible. I would buy Pantene products.”

With this in mind, it is evident that the participants found the celebrity endorser quite impactful and effective as seven out of eight participants felt as though Selena Gomez has a lot of power over the perception of the advertisement.

For Jennifer Aniston pictured in Figure 4.1, there were only positive feelings mentioned: talented, funny, respected, relatable, and gorgeous. In turn, these positive feelings correlated with level of trust as five out of eight participants felt as though this advertisement made them trust Aniston more.



**Figure 4: Jennifer Aniston advertising her own perfume line (c) *Allure*, February 2011**

One participant even related this to wanting to be more like the actress. Simplicity was again recognized as an effective layout for this advertisement. For many, the soft, subtle colors used in the design and the natural beauty of Aniston correlate with the product and, thus, make the celebrity more credible and the advertisement more effective. As one participant noted, “I think that the perfume makes the reader feel like if they have that perfume they will be more like Jennifer Aniston.” Here, one can see the connection to identity, which resulted in all participants believing that she has a lot of power over the perception of the advertisement. This power also results from a clear connection between content, advertisement design, and celebrity choice, which six participants felt was present in Figure 4.1.

The final advertisement, Figure 5.1, received much different responses from the others. Not only were two participants unsure of whom the celebrity even was, but also five of the eight participants had negative or neutral feelings about the actress in addition to the level of trust.



**Figure 5: Emma Stone for Revlon Nail Art**  
(c) *InStyle*, April 2013

In response to overall visual design, respondents felt that while the mood was fun and vibrant, which was emphasized by the color usage, Emma Stone was lost in the layout because of the greater emphasis on the product. Although many viewed this as a negative design element, two respondents felt that showcasing the product added credibility to the brand; one participant shared that “The layout, mood, and visual design make it believable because I think of her as the girl who isn’t noticed at first. She has a quiet and unique beauty, and I think this ad represents that well.” When asked about the connection between content, advertisement design, and celebrity choice, all participants felt that there was a greater connection between content and advertisement design and that the celebrity endorser did not have as great an impact. Because of the layout of the advertisement, all participants felt as though Emma Stone had very little power in this advertisement. In general, this lack of power was associated with the fact that the celebrity endorser is not really “selling” the product, which is one of the main goals in using celebrity endorsers, because her role in the advertisement is so small. Ultimately, her ethos is lacking here because of the emphasis on the bold visual design; there is greater stress on advertising the product rather than using the celebrity endorser to promote the product.

In the final two questions, participants were asked to respond to what made a particular advertisement the most successful or the least successful. Though responses varied greatly, it was apparent that how participants’ viewed success depended upon what they identified with. In one instance, sexy and sophisticated advertisements were deemed most successful; on the other hand, funny and honest advertisements won out because it

was more believable that the product was used by the celebrity. Nevertheless, two participants felt that cohesiveness—celebrity and product match—made an advertisement the most successful; in a similar sense, two other participants felt that a layout that showcased the product made an advertisement most successful.

For least successful advertisements, five respondents noted that design and aesthetic appeal impacted effectiveness. Often referencing the Emma Stone advertisement (Figure 5.1), participants felt that there was a lack of visual appeal; this was most often connected to the small image of the celebrity. At the same time, two participants felt as though perception of celebrity impacts the success of advertisements. For one participant, there were positive feelings about the brand and not the celebrity, therefore, resulting in a lack of interest in the advertisement; similarly, one participant noted that individuals who are loyal to a celebrity like Beyonce (Figure 1.1) would find the advertisement more successful than people who are not. All in all, for these participants, success seems to be determined in regard to whether identity is established with design, celebrity, and/or product.

### **Conclusions**

Although there were varying findings when analyzing participants' responses, conclusions can be drawn in regard to what rhetorical factors make celebrity endorsements effective. Beginning with coherence, it is evident that having coherence between design, product, and celebrity is vital to achieving an effective celebrity endorsement. Overall, advertisements need to make the consumer feel involved in what they are looking at. This involvement relies on a connection between the visual appeal of

the advertisement and the product (Stathakopoulos et al., 2008, p. 632). Involvement, which is the centerpiece to the elements that create effective advertisements, is demonstrated through gratification or purchase intentions; ultimately, if an advertisement is coherent in its form, consumers will be involved and persuaded (Blair, 1996, p. 28; Covino, 1998, p. 102). As demonstrated in the findings, if a design element like the celebrity image in Figure 5 is not consistent with the advertisement's overall theme, consumers will not engage because there is a level of irrelevance to what they are viewing (Kress & vanLeeuwen, 2006, p. 181-183; Stathakopoulos et al., 2008, p. 653). There must be a significant need for incorporating a celebrity endorser into an advertisement; they must enhance the coherence of the advertisement and sell the product. Further emphasizing the need for coherence relates to branding; there cannot only be consistency between design, celebrity, and product, but there also has to be a connection to the brand in order to maintain an impactful message (Blair, 1996, p. 31-32; Elberse and Verleun, 2012, p. 151; Roswinanto and Strutton, 2014, p. 622-23;). All in all, complete coherence in an advertisement ensures a consumer interaction will exist.

A significant element that coincides with this consumer interaction is the design of the advertisement. As participants often indicated, there was greater appreciation for the simpler designs. Although text and captions can be informative, the data demonstrates that participants were more persuaded by advertisements that lacked text and that used simple colors. While society may still have a substantial level of reliance on the written word, one can conclude that including captions, no matter their position, in an advertisement does not make consumers want to engage (Barthes, 1985, p. 27). Instead,

consumers take greater pleasure in how brands utilize technological advancements in software and design methods to create an appealing aesthetic that develops interaction between the elements of the composition; this pleasure is rooted in the association between technology and societal progress (Covino, 1998, p. 99-111; Kress & vanLeeuwen, 2006, p. 181-183). Again referencing coherence, if there is consistency between the use of technology and appealing visual aesthetic, then consumers will likely desire the product being advertised.

Creating the ability to identify was also a key conclusion based on the data collected. The identification process relies upon the interaction between “intentions, beliefs, assumptions, and experiences” that occur between the celebrity endorser and the consumer (Covino, 1998, p. 3). In some instances, this ability to identify is of greater importance than the overall content of the advertisement (Stathakopoulos et al., 2008, p. 630). Viewing a celebrity endorser as possessing similar attributes of self-image not only demonstrates how values and characteristics shape how celebrities are viewed as inspirational to consumers, but it also convinces consumers of the worth of the product and brand because shared values are embedded in the advertisement (Cheney, 1983, p. 147; Choi and Rifon, 2012, p. 641; Fogliasso and Thuo, n.d., p. 31; McCracken, 1989, p. 317-318; Mukherjee, 2009, p. 1;). Nevertheless, this identification is also centered on trust in conjunction with shared values. From the data collected, it is clear that perception of celebrity impacts trust, yet when a consumer feels as though a celebrity uses the product advertised and that they can trust the celebrities’ endorsement, purchasing intentions are swayed (Silvera and Austad, 2003, p. 1521-1524). However, it is still

necessary to note that consumers' biases and beliefs impact what is deemed as the truth, which in turn impacts level of trust in the celebrity (Covino, 1998, p. 44). Consequently, even though celebrities have many outlets such as social media that impact their image in addition to providing the opportunity to improve that image, purchase intentions are greatly impacted on how and if consumers' values align with self-image and how and if they work to develop the ideal self (Cheney, 1983, p. 146; Tzoumaka et al, 2014, p. 15).

In their entirety, celebrity endorsed advertisements are not accepted and believed without considering how different elements of rhetoric play a role; there is no level of "happy consciousness" or a simple entertainment factor in how these advertisements are perceived (Covino, 1998, p. 103). Rather, celebrity endorsed advertisements must rely on being customer centric in that the overall messages must align with branding, product, celebrity, and consumer values (Fogliasso and Thuo, n.d., p. 30). Each element—design, trust, identity, coherence—all stand for something that directly pertains to the consumer. They, thus, convey meaning—a meaning that is revealed through persuasiveness and the potential purchase of the product (Stathakopoulos et al., 2008, p. 632). "The language of the image is not merely the entirety of utterances emitted, it is also the entirety of utterances received" (Barthes, 1985, p. 36). Consequently, celebrity endorsed advertisements need to emphasize the use of rhetoric to form a persuasive promotional text that appeals to a wide demographic; to do this, careful decisions must be made in relation to design, celebrity choice, and product. These decisions will, therefore, craft an advertisement that is received by consumers, allows them to become involved and persuaded, and establishes positive purchasing intentions.

## **Implications**

All in all, this study works to demonstrate to advertising and marketing specialists what is needed to make a successful celebrity endorsement. In general, this can be narrowed down to rhetoric. For professionals, this means that there is not just one agent that they need to effectively utilize in order to capture a consumer's attention and sway his or her purchase intentions; rather, it is not just a trustworthy celebrity, but it is also coherence, aesthetic of design, and perception of celebrity, which can lead to identifying with the celebrity. Ultimately, this knowledge is beneficial because it can be used by professionals to improve their advertisements and, thus, advance beyond the competition. Although this study only analyzed advertisements in the beauty industry, it is likely that the same rhetorical concepts will be beneficial in other industries. Nevertheless, future studies should examine how industries differ as well as how usage of diverse celebrities and athletes impact how effective an advertisement is. Furthermore, participants should be asked how the advertisement impacts their purchasing intentions. These participants could also be more diverse in terms of race and gender. With the results of the current study as well as future data, conclusions would suggest that celebrity endorsers have a high level of control over consumers—a level of control that is directly related to the employment of rhetoric.



## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Criteria for Analyzing Celebrity Endorsed Advertisements

Upon examining participants' responses, each advertisement's success was analyzed in terms of the factors participants observed were present or lacking. The analyses developed from this rubric can be used to aid in the development of successful advertisements using celebrity endorsers.

#### *3-Successful*

**Effective celebrity endorsed advertisements will exhibit the following characteristics:**

- **Celebrity identification:** Participants are easily able to identify the celebrity pictured.
- **Perception of celebrity:** Overall positive feelings toward the celebrity are shared.
- **Trust:** Participants experience a positive level of trust.
- **Ethos of design:** Color, layout, mood, and overall visual design work together to positively impact the credibility of the advertisement design.
- **Cohesiveness:** Definitive connection exists between content, advertisement design, and celebrity choice.
- **Power of celebrity:** The celebrity controls a high level of power over the perception of the advertisement.

#### *2-Moderately Successful*

**Moderately effective celebrity endorsed advertisements will exhibit the following characteristics:**

- **Celebrity identification:** Participants are able to identify the celebrity pictured but some levels of uncertainty are evident.
- **Perception of celebrity:** Neutral feelings toward the celebrity are shared.
- **Trust:** Participants experience a neutral level of trust.
- **Ethos of design:** A combination of color, layout, mood, and overall visual design impact the credibility of the advertisement design, but do not all work together.
- **Cohesiveness:** Connection may exist between content, advertisement design, and celebrity choice, but it is not as clear.
- **Power of celebrity:** The celebrity controls a moderate level of power over the perception of the advertisement.

#### *1-Unsuccessful*

**Ineffective celebrity endorsed advertisements will exhibit the following characteristics:**

- **Celebrity identification:** Participants are not able to easily identify the celebrity pictured.

- **Perception of celebrity:** Mainly negative feelings toward the celebrity are shared.
- **Trust:** Participants experience a negative level of trust.
- **Ethos of design:** Only one of the following factors, color, layout, mood, and overall visual design, work to impact the credibility of the advertisement design.
- **Cohesiveness:** Lack of connection exists between content, advertisement design, and celebrity choice.
- **Power of celebrity:** The celebrity controls a minor level of power over the perception of the advertisement.

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