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Star power: the evolution of celebrity endorsement research

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Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this paper is to summarize the celebrity endorsement literature to identify trends and challenges related to key research areas. Based on a critical review of existing literature, this paper presents several recommendations regarding potential future directions of celebrity endorsement research in hospitality and tourism.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper presents a critical review of literature from both the general marketing and hospitality and tourism fields.

Findings – Over the past decade, significant progress has been made in hospitality and tourism celebrity endorsement research, with several new constructs being revealed and tested. However, the extant findings are rather mixed and inconclusive because industry features have not been systematically examined and study contexts and samples have varied widely. To advance the hospitality and tourism celebrity endorsement research, an extended meaning transfer model with six propositions is proposed. Several areas for future research are also discussed.

Practical implications – This paper offers up-to-date findings on celebrity endorsement to practitioners, and the proposed extended meaning transfer model can provide marketers useful guidelines on selecting appropriate endorsers for their products/brands.

Originality/value – In previous studies, scholars mainly used one or more of the three types of celebrity endorser selection models and only examined specific antecedents of effective endorsement. To date, researchers have not yet conceptualized a modified model that captures the unique features of the hospitality and tourism industry and reconciles the mixed findings in the extant literature. This paper proposes an extended meaning transfer model to explain the endorser selection process, provides a good foundational understanding of the extant celebrity endorsement research and makes several recommendations regarding future research directions for hospitality and tourism scholars with implications for practitioners.

Keywords Meaning transfer model, Celebrity endorsement, Celebrity endorser, Identity signalling, Match-up hypothesis, Source model, Source credibility, Source attractiveness

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Celebrity endorsement has long been recognized as a prevalent strategy in modern marketing (McCracken, 1989). It is considered as a powerful promotional tool by marketers worldwide. Extant literature suggests that approximately one-in-four advertisements use celebrity endorsers in Western countries (Doss, 2011; Spry *et al.*, 2011), and the percentage of celebrity endorsements used in television commercials can be as high as 60 per cent in East Asian countries such as Korea, Japan and India (Choi *et al.*, 2005; McCaughan, 2007; Schaefer *et al.*, 2010). In fact, marketers spend a significant proportion of their budgets (approximately 10 per cent) compensating celebrity endorsers. For example, Nike spent \$1.44bn on celebrity endorsements in 2003 (Ding *et al.*, 2011). Companies spend such enormous amounts of money on celebrity endorsement advertisements with the hope that



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celebrities will be effective spokespersons for their products or brands. Extant studies demonstrate that good celebrity endorsers can influence advertising effectiveness, brand recognition, brand attitudes, brand recall, product evaluations, purchase intentions and behaviors (Spry *et al.*, 2011; Till *et al.*, 2008)

In the hospitality and tourism industry, celebrity endorsement is also becoming more popular because hospitality firms are finding it increasingly difficult to stand out in the marketplace and gain market share. Challenges stem from a saturated market, an abundance of substitute products and the recent explosion in the number of promotional channels and messages. As a result, a growing number of hospitality and tourism companies have begun to employ celebrity endorsers to break through this promotional clutter, differentiate their brand images from those of their competitors and solidify their competitive positions in the minds of their target customers. For example, Mandarin Oriental, a luxury hotel brand, has been using an international advertising campaign that uses a play on word connecting the brand's well-recognized symbol, a fan, with several international celebrities such as Lucy Liu, Morgan Freeman and Sophie Marceau, who are "fans" of the brand and regular visitors. Celebrity endorsements are even more common in the restaurant, airline and tourism industries. For example, Emirates airline recently invited Jennifer Aniston to be its new endorser to highlight the brand's lavish experiences and association with an elite lifestyle, Burger King hired David Beckham to promote its low-calorie smoothie in 2012 and Chris Hemsworth (the actor who plays Thor in the Marvel movie series) was recently appointed as the tourism ambassador for Australia in a campaign highlighting the country's coastal scenes and experiences. While not comprehensive, Table I presents a list of celebrity endorsers used in the hospitality and tourism industry (through an internet search) and demonstrates the popularity of celebrity endorsement strategy among hospitality and tourism organizations.

Despite the popularity of celebrity endorsement strategies in the hospitality and tourism industry, only a few scholars have examined this topic (Johns *et al.*, 2015; Kim *et al.*, 2014; Lee *et al.*, 2008; Magnini *et al.*, 2008, 2010; McCartney and Pinto, 2014; van der Veen, 2008; Yen and Teng, 2015). More importantly, given the fundamental differences between material possessions and intangible hospitality and tourism services, it is not clear whether findings and principles revealed in the general marketing literature can be directly applied to the hospitality and tourism context. Therefore, the aim of the current study is to provide a comprehensive review of the research on celebrity endorsement in both the general marketing and hospitality and tourism literature. This article will discuss the key topics that have been investigated in celebrity endorsement studies, highlight the general findings and identify new directions for future hospitality and tourism research with implications for practitioners.

All celebrity endorsement-related publications in general marketing and hospitality and tourism journals were searched for and gathered from five online databases, namely, ABI/INFORM Collection, Science Direct, EBSCOHost, Emerald Full Text and Sage Journals. These databases are the major academic and most comprehensive online databases for business, hospitality and tourism research (Law *et al.*, 2010, 2014; Leung *et al.*, 2013; Kim and Law, 2015). Moreover, Google Scholar was used to check for potentially missed articles. Relevant key words such as "celebrity endorsement", "celebrity endorser", "celebrities" and "product endorsement" were used to find articles pertaining to celebrity endorsement. Only full-length, peer-reviewed articles were retrieved.

Once identified, each paper was carefully reviewed by the author and a research assistant to determine its direct relevance to the topic. At the end of the data collection

Industry	Brand	Celebrity endorser	Campaign year(s)
Hotel	Mandarin Oriental	Sophie Marceau	French actress
		Kenzo Takada	Japanese-French fashion designer
		Lucy Liu	American actress
		Kevin Spacey	Actor, director and producer
		Martin Mull	American actor and comedian
	Red Roof Inn The Dorchester Collection	Elizabeth Taylor	British-American actress
		Peter Sellers	English actor and singer
		Joan Collins	English actress and author
		Andy Warhol	American artist
		Thandie Newton	English actress
Celebrity restaurant (owned by a celebrity)	Soul Kitchen	Bon Jovi	American singer/songwriter
	Nobu	Robert De Niro	American actor and producer
	Nyla	Britney Spears	American singer and actress
	Madres	Jennifer Lopez	American singer and actress
	Vegi Terranean	Chrissie Hynde	American musician
Celebrity chef restaurant (owned by a celebrity chef)	Jamie's Italian	Jamie Oliver	British celebrity chef
	Salt	Luke Mangan	Australian chef
	Cat Cora	Cat Cora	American chef
	Spago	Wolfgang Puck	Austrian-born American chef
	Morimoto	Masaharu Morimoto	Japanese chef
Restaurant	Burger King	David Beckham	English former football player
		Mary J. Blige	American singer and mode
		Sofia Vergara	Colombian-American actress
		Katy Perry	American singer and songwriter
		Taking Back Sunday	American rock band
	Domino's Pizza	Eva Longoria	American actress and producer
		Sarah Hyland	American actress
		Richard Sherman	American football cornerback
		Naomi Ellen Watts	British actress and film producer
		Jennifer Aniston	American actress, producer and
Airline	British Airways	Hugh Jackman	Australian actor, singer and
	Emirates	Kevin Costner	American actor, film director
	Qantas Airlines	Chris Hemsworth	Australian actor
	Turkish Airlines	Meryl Streep	American actress and singer
	Australia	Psy	South Korean pop singer
Tourism destination	New York City		
	New York State		
	Korea		

Notes: The endorsers listed in this table, both living and dead, were identified through an internet search, as of September 23, 2016, and are not intended to suggest a comprehensive listing of all endorsers used by hospitality and tourism organizations

Table I.
Selected examples of
celebrity endorsers
used by hospitality
and tourism
organizations

process, a final sample of 138 papers in the general marketing area was identified. In terms of date distribution, the numbers of studies published in 1980s, 1990s, 2000s and 2010s were 9, 20, 42 and 67, respectively. Some major journals include *Journal of Advertising* ($N = 10$), *Journal of Advertising Research* ($N = 7$), *Journal of Promotion Management* ($N = 6$) and *Psychology & Marketing* ($N = 5$).

Unfortunately, unlike the significant amount of work and a growing interest in the general marketing literature, hospitality and tourism scholars started investigating the celebrity endorsement topic relatively late (from 2000s) and paid relatively less attention to it. Only 27 hospitality and tourism papers were retrieved. Between 2005 and 2009, eight

articles were published and 19 articles were published after 2000. The papers were drawn from 20 journals such as *Journal of Vacation Marketing* ($N = 3$), *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing* ($N = 3$), *International Journal of Hospitality Management* ($N = 2$) and *International Journal of Tourism Research* ($N = 2$).

2. Findings on celebrity endorsement from the general marketing literature

2.1 Who are celebrity endorsers?

Traditionally, celebrity endorsers are movie stars, singers, models, athletes, politicians and business people (Hsu and McDonald, 2002). Nowadays, with the increasing popularity of reality television shows and numerous social media channels (e.g. YouTube, Facebook, Twitter), the definition of a celebrity has been expanded. "Ordinary" people featured on reality shows can become famous and be perceived as celebrities. For instance, Ben Higgins from *The Bachelor* Season 19 was featured in a McDonald's All Day Breakfast commercial in 2016. Consumers can also become famous through social media. For example, Michelle Pham was appointed as Lancôme's first Vietnamese spokesperson after attracting a huge following on her personal blog and YouTube channel. Given these recent developments, this article uses McCracken's (1989, p. 310) broader definition of a celebrity endorser 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".

Accordingly, celebrity endorsement is a promotional tool whereby celebrities give their opinions, act as spokespersons or simply are associated with a product/brand (McCracken, 1989). An endorsement can be explicit (e.g. I endorse this airline), implicit (e.g. I like this restaurant), imperative (e.g. You should pick Korea as the destination for your next trip) or co-presentational (e.g. merely appearing in a hotel advertisement) (Seno and Lukas, 2007). Extant literature on celebrity endorsement has mainly focused on:

- (a) the impact of celebrity endorsement, including various advantages and threats; and
- (b) celebrity endorser selection strategies.

2.2 The impact of celebrity endorsement: benefits and risks

Prior studies have revealed several benefits of celebrity endorsement. In general, using a celebrity endorser can attract increased attention to advertisements, elicit more favorable attitudes toward the advertisements and the endorsed products/brands and lead to higher purchase intentions (Amos *et al.*, 2008; Atkin and Block, 1983; Erdogan, 1999; Kamins *et al.*, 1989; Malik and Guptha, 2014; O'Mahony and Meenaghan, 1997; Seno and Lukas, 2007). Consumers usually have a preconceived image of a celebrity endorser, and such an image can be transferred to the endorsed product/brand. According to associative learning theory (ALT), an individual's memory is similar to a network with numerous nodes joined by associative links (Erdogan, 1999). When a celebrity endorses a product/brand, images of the celebrity and the product/brand occupy nodes in one's memory and gradually become connected through the process of endorsement. Consequently, feelings and attitudes toward the celebrity are transferred to the endorsed product/brand through repeated exposure. Compared to other types of endorsers such as experts and typical consumers, celebrity endorsers are quickly recognized by audiences and help build emotional associations between consumers and the endorsed products (Erdogan, 1999). In other words, using celebrity endorsers can help products/brands cut through the clutter of other advertisements, resulting in favorable attitudinal and behavioral responses (Doss, 2011).

In addition to positive consumer reactions, the use of celebrity endorsement can generate financial benefits for a company. For example, [Agrawal and Kamakura \(1995\)](#) investigated stock prices and suggested that using celebrity endorsers generates, on average, a 0.44 per cent excess return. [Russell *et al.* \(2005\)](#) also revealed that positive publicity for the celebrity endorser can lead to higher cash flow expectations. [Table II](#) depicts the major documented benefits of using celebrity endorsement in promotional messages.

Despite the aforementioned advantages, the use of celebrity endorsers is associated with many potential hazards. A celebrity may experience waning popularity before the end of a contractual term, or even get involved in public controversies/scandals ([Erdogan, 1999](#)). Empirical evidence suggests that negative information about celebrity endorsers can result in negative perceptions of the endorsed product/brand, as well as decreases in sales or market value. For example, [Knittel and Stango \(2014\)](#) revealed that the market value of Tiger Woods' sponsors fell substantively after news of his sex scandal broke. Results of study on celebrity influence conducted by a market research firm also suggest that some famous celebrities such as Britney Spears and Paris Hilton actually make some consumers want to buy less of the endorsed products ([Erdogan, 1999](#)). [Kim and Sung \(2013\)](#) further demonstrated that such a risk could be more devastating to a new or unfamiliar brand than an established one. For new or unfamiliar brands, consumers rely mainly on the celebrity endorser's image to form an associative memory link between the endorser and the brand. In other words, the celebrity is the primary attribute on which consumers form their attitudes and evaluations of the brand. When that celebrity is involved in a scandal or triggers negative publicity, consumers' perceptions of the endorsed brand/product change quickly in the same direction. Similarly, such a risk is stronger when a brand/product is closely tied to one specific celebrity endorser owing to the strong associative link between the brand/product and the celebrity.

Another major threat caused by ineffective celebrity endorsement is the "vampire effect". The vampire effect happens when a celebrity's image does not match the endorsed product. In such situations, consumers find it difficult to associate the meaning of the product with the celebrity endorser, and consequently, their attention is directed to the celebrity rather than the advertised product/brand ([Erdogan, 1999](#); [Erdogan and Baker, 2000](#); [Karlíček and](#)

Benefits	References
Increased attention to advertisements and higher recall rate	Atkin and Block (1983) , Erdogan and Baker (2000) , Friedman and Friedman (1979) , Hunter (2009) , Kamins <i>et al.</i> (1989) , O'Mahony and Meenaghan (1997) , Seno and Lukas (2007)
Favorable attitudinal responses such as attitude toward the advertisement and attitude toward the product/brand	Amos <i>et al.</i> (2008) , Atkin and Block (1983) , Choi and Rifon (2012) , Freiden (1984) , Kamins <i>et al.</i> (1989)
Stronger emotional ties between consumers and the endorsed brand	Doss (2011) , Friedman and Friedman (1979)
Favorable behavioral responses, including purchase intentions and actual purchase behaviors	Atkin and Block (1983) , Friedman and Friedman (1979) , Malik and Guptha (2014)
Salient personality and appeal of the product/brand transferred from the celebrity endorser	Dickenson (1996)
Global market expansion	Erdogan (1999)
Higher stock price and other financial benefits	Agrawal and Kamakura (1995) , Farrell <i>et al.</i> (2000) , Mathur <i>et al.</i> (1997) , Russell <i>et al.</i> (2005)

Table II.
Benefits of a celebrity
endorsement
strategy

Kuvita, 2014). In other words, an inappropriate celebrity endorser will overshadow the endorsed brand, “suck the blood” out of the product and impair consumers’ recall of the brand after seeing the advertisement (Erfgen *et al.*, 2015).

Overexposure is another situation that can make celebrity endorsement a double-edged sword. When a celebrity becomes an endorser for many diverse products, the impact of the celebrity endorsement on each product/brand may weaken because the tie between the celebrity and endorsed brand/product is no longer special or distinctive (Mowen and Brown, 1981). Tripp *et al.* (1994) demonstrated that when a celebrity endorses several products, his/her credibility and likeability drop significantly. Consequently, consumers exhibit unfavorable attitudes toward the advertisements and the endorsed products. In fact, overexposure not only decreases endorsement strength but also leads to consumers’ awareness of the true nature of endorsement, which relates less to the endorsed product and more to the compensation paid to the celebrity (Cooper, 1984; Tripp *et al.*, 1994).

In addition to the aforementioned celebrity personal issues and endorsement strategy problems, consumers may simply change their tastes during an advertising campaign or decide that they are not in favor of the concept of celebrity endorsement (Doss, 2011; Roy, 2016). For example, Armbruster (2006) argued that in the USA, affluent consumers are not as influenced by celebrity endorsers as consumers in other income brackets. In other words, celebrity endorsement may not be a powerful communication tool in the affluent US market. Table III lists the major documented potential risks associated with a celebrity endorsement strategy.

Given the benefits and risks of using celebrity endorsement, it is not surprising to find mixed results in the extant literature on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement as a marketing strategy. Some scholars have argued that there is no difference between celebrity and noncelebrity endorsers’ influence on advertising attitudes, brand attitudes and purchase behaviors (Keel and Natarajan, 2012; Mehta, 1994); other scholars have demonstrated that noncelebrity endorsers can be more powerful than celebrity endorsers (Keel and Natarajan, 2012; Tom *et al.*, 1992). However, the majority of marketers and researchers believe that if used appropriately, celebrity endorsement can be an effective communication strategy to promote a product/brand and influence consumers’ buying decisions. The key issue is deciding which celebrity to employ (Erdogan and Baker, 2000). Given the high costs of compensating celebrity endorsers and the potential threats associated with a celebrity endorsement strategy, it is imperative to understand how to choose appropriate celebrities for specific products/brands (Atkin and Block, 1983; Choi and Rifon, 2012; Erdogan, 1999). What characteristics should be considered? Are celebrity popularity and likeability enough to trigger positive and lasting reactions? The

Table III.
Risks of a celebrity endorsement strategy

Risks	References
Celebrity image change, waning popularity, public controversy/scandal	Klebba and Unger (1983), Knittel and Stango (2014), Till and Shimp (1998), Ziegel (1983)
Vampire effect (i.e. the celebrity overshadows the endorsed product/brand)	Erdogan (1999), Erdogan and Baker (2000), Evans (1988), Rossiter and Percy (1987)
Over-endorsement/over-exposure	Cooper (1984), Graham (1989), Kim and Sung (2013), Mowen and Brown (1981), Tripp <i>et al.</i> (1994)
Changes in consumer tastes or resistance to celebrity endorsement	Armbruster (2006), Biswas <i>et al.</i> (2006), Doss (2011)

next section reviews major models of celebrity endorser selection that have been examined in the marketing literature.

2.3 Selecting effective celebrity endorsers

The literature on celebrity endorser selection is extensive. Hovland *et al.* (1953) presented one of the earliest models, called the source credibility model. They argued that the effectiveness of a message depends on the perceived level of expertise and trustworthiness of an endorser (Goldsmith *et al.*, 2000; Ohanian, 1990). Following Hovland's pioneering work, three additional models were proposed:

- (1) the source attractiveness model (La Ferle and Choi, 2005; Langmeyer and Shank, 1994; Ohanian, 1990; Solomon *et al.*, 1992; Spry *et al.*, 2011);
- (2) the match-up hypothesis (Erdogan, 1999; Forkan, 1980; Kamins *et al.*, 1989; Kamins and Gupta, 1994); and
- (3) the meaning transfer model (McCracken, 1989).

Unfortunately, scholars have not yet reached consensus on which of these models is most effective. In the following sections, each model is reviewed in turn.

2.3.1 Source models. There are two types of source models, i.e. the source credibility model and the source attractiveness model. Both models focus on the celebrity endorser as a message source and claim that the communication source has an important influence on message receptivity (Erdogan, 1999).

The source credibility model suggests that a promotional message from a credible source impacts consumers' beliefs, attitudes and behaviors (Dholakia and Sternthal, 1977; Hovland *et al.*, 1953; Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990). *Credibility* is defined as "the extent to which the source is perceived as possessing expertise relevant to the communication topic and can be trusted to give an objective opinion on the subject" (Goldsmith *et al.*, 2000, p. 43). Information from a credible source (e.g. a celebrity) can influence beliefs, opinions, attitudes and/or behaviors through a process called *internalization*, which occurs when receivers accept influence from a source on their personal attitudes and value structures. In other words, a celebrity's perceived credibility can significantly influence communication effectiveness indicators such as advertisement recall rates and purchase intentions.

In the endorsement literature, two attributes, trustworthiness and expertise, have been documented as important indicators of an endorser's credibility. *Trustworthiness* refers to a celebrity endorser's perceived believability, honesty and integrity. A celebrity's trustworthiness depends on the target audience's perceptions (Erdogan, 1999). In general, consumers have higher confidence in celebrities who are widely regarded as believable and honest (Ohanian, 1990; Shimp, 1997). *Expertise* refers to a celebrity endorser's perceived level of knowledge, experience or skill related to the endorsed product/brand (Erdogan, 1999). Similar to trustworthiness, a celebrity's expertise level also depends on the target audience's perceptions (Hovland *et al.*, 1953; Ohanian, 1990). A celebrity may not be a real expert on the endorsed product, but if he/she is perceived to be a valid source of information, the endorsement message will be more persuasive and generate more favorable reactions (e.g. favorable attitudes toward the product and higher purchase intentions) (Aaker and Myers, 1987; Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1990).

The source attractiveness model, on the other hand, is based on stereotypes related to physical attractiveness. Extant studies suggest that consumers tend to form positive stereotypes about attractive people and react more positively when the message source is

perceived to be attractive (Baker and Churchill, 1977; Chaiken, 1979; Debevec and Kernan, 1984; Friedman *et al.*, 1976; Petrosius and Crocker, 1989; Petty and Cacioppo, 1980). People desire to identify with attractive people and thus tend to be more willing to accept messages from attractive endorsers (Cohen and Golden, 1972). In theory, attractiveness includes both physical attractiveness and virtuous characteristics such as personality, lifestyle and intellectual skills (Erdogan, 1999). However, in the practice of celebrity endorsement, advertisers mainly focus on physical attractiveness (Erdogan and Baker, 2000; Tantiseneepong *et al.*, 2012).

Although source models are considered to be the earliest models in the field, both scholars and practitioners appear to be equivocal on their effectiveness in selecting appropriate celebrity endorsers. Erdogan and Baker (2000) conducted semi-structured interviews with employees of 12 advertising agencies in the UK and discovered that advertising agents rarely consider celebrity endorsers' credibility and attractiveness owing to ambivalent attitudes toward such characteristics. Indeed, academic studies provide rather mixed support for source models (Erdogan, 1999). For example, Ohanian (1990) developed a three-dimension measurement model based on attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise and found that all three factors had significant impacts on consumers' purchase intentions for one celebrity (i.e. Tom Selleck) but not for a different celebrity (i.e. Linda Evans). Ohanian (1991) further revealed that celebrity trustworthiness does not lead to higher purchase intentions for the endorsed brand. Speck *et al.* (1988) found no significant difference on recall of product information between products endorsed by expert celebrities and non-expert celebrities.

Some scholars further argued that there might be limiting conditions to the source credibility model (Keel and Nataraajan, 2012). For example, a less credible endorser can be more persuasive than a more credible one when consumers have a positive predisposition toward the advertisement (Erdogan, 1999; Harmon and Coney, 1982; Sternthal *et al.*, 1978). Kahle and Homer (1985) conducted an experiment manipulating the celebrity endorser's physical attractiveness and likeability. The study findings suggest that consumers show higher purchase intentions when a celebrity endorser is attractive (vs unattractive), but surprisingly, consumers react more positively when a celebrity endorser is unlikable (vs likeable) (Erdogan, 1999). In contrast, Tantiseneepong *et al.* (2012) revealed that likeability is more powerful than a celebrity's physical attractiveness. Results of other studies also indicate that the positive feelings generated from attractive celebrity endorsers do not always translate into higher purchase intentions (Caballero *et al.*, 1989; Petty *et al.*, 1983; Till and Busler, 1998).

2.3.2 Match-up hypothesis. Owing to the contradictory findings related to source models, a group of scholars proposed an alternative explanation to aid the selection of celebrity endorsers – namely, the match-up hypothesis (Erdogan, 1999; Forkan, 1980; Kamins *et al.*, 1989; Kamins and Gupta, 1994). This group of researchers claimed that beyond source credibility and attractiveness, there must be a congruent relationship between the celebrity and the product he/she is endorsing (Evans, 1988). When there is a mismatch, the “vampire effect” tends to occur, which causes the audience to remember the celebrity, not the endorsed product/brand.

In general, it is easier for consumers to build an associative link between two stimuli that are similar to each other (McSweeney and Bierley, 1984). That associative link makes the perceived “fit” between the brand/product and the celebrity an important antecedent of effective endorsement. McCracken (1989) believed that poor fit between brands and celebrities is the primary reason why certain celebrity endorsements are unsuccessful. Therefore, the match-up hypothesis argues that a celebrity endorsement strategy will be

more effective and persuasive if there is a match between the endorsed product/brand and the celebrity endorser. Empirical evidence shows that high congruency between a product and a celebrity leads to greater advertisement believability and, consequently, results in more favorable attitudes toward the product/brand, higher purchase intentions and willingness to pay higher prices (Erdogan, 1999; Kahle and Homer, 1985; Kalra and Goodstein, 1998; Kamins and Gupta, 1994; Levy, 1959; Misra and Beatty, 1990; Sengupta *et al.*, 1997; Till and Busler, 1998). Moreover, the benefits of a good match may also spill over to the celebrity endorser, as it increases the celebrity's believability and attractiveness (Kamins and Gupta, 1994).

Unfortunately, there is a lack of consensus on which product/brand attributes and celebrity characteristics should be matched. Extant studies on the match-up hypothesis have focused on several aspects of celebrity characteristics such as gender, skin color, expertise, physical attractiveness and other relevant factors (Hsu and McDonald, 2002; Huston *et al.*, 2003; Kamins, 1990). Most researchers have investigated the match between a product and a celebrity in terms of physical attractiveness. For example, Kahle and Homer (1985) and Kamins (1990) argued that attractive celebrities are more persuasive when endorsing products used to enhance one's attractiveness (e.g. razor blades). However, Till and Busler (1998, 2000) found that expertise is more appropriate for matching endorsers with brands than physical attractiveness, arguing that "physical attractiveness is not a strong match-up factor because the link from 'attractive endorser' to product used to enhance one's attractiveness may not be readily apparent" (Till and Busler, 2000, p. 12).

Other scholars further questioned the match on physical attractiveness. Bower and Landreth (2001) found that "normal-looking" celebrity endorsers elicit more favorable reactions than highly attractive ones, even for products that are used to enhance one's physical appearance. They suggested that normal-looking people may be perceived as more honest and trustworthy, thus leading to more effective endorsements. It is also possible that using a highly attractive endorser may generate greater post-purchase dissonance owing to the wide gap between consumers' actual self-images and the projected product image (Marshall *et al.*, 2008). For example, Lee and Thorson (2008) revealed that a moderate mismatch between a celebrity's image and a product's image triggers higher purchase intentions than either a complete match or an extreme mismatch.

It is apparent that even though the match-up hypothesis resolves some issues associated with source models and demonstrates that not all attractive, credible or likeable celebrities can easily sell any product, it remains difficult to know which dimensions should be matched between a product/brand and a celebrity. As stated by Erdogan (1999), the match-up hypothesis disregards cultural meanings in the endorsement process, and scholars should consider and match a celebrity's overall image with the endorsed brand and the target audience. In the next section, McCracken's (1989) meaning transfer model, which includes all the cultural connotations of celebrities, products and consumers, is introduced.

2.3.3 Meaning transfer model. Extensive studies demonstrate that consumers purchase certain products not only for what they do but also for what they symbolize (Levy, 1959). Consumers tend to create, define and retain their identities through their consumption objects; they acquire, use and display goods and services to enhance a sense of self, to present a certain image in public and to boost social status (Ahuvia, 2005; Belk, 1988, 1990; Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998; Oyserman, 2009; Richins, 1994; Schouten, 1991).

Based on this line of reasoning, [McCracken \(1989\)](#) used associative learning theory (ATL) to investigate shifts in meaning resulting from the endorsement process, arguing that repeated association between a brand and a celebrity endorser creates an identity/image transfer from the endorser to the brand ([Magnini et al., 2010](#)). He proposed a three-stage model to illustrate the cultural meanings conferred through the endorsement process. In the first stage, celebrity endorsers develop certain symbolic properties unrelated to the endorsement based on their status, class, lifestyles, film roles, political campaigns or athletic achievements. Next, the symbolic properties become associated with the product/brand through the endorsement process. In the last stage, symbolic meanings are transferred from the product/brand to consumers when they purchase the endorsed product/brand.

Although all three model types (source models, the match-up hypothesis and the meaning transfer model) have been tested extensively and have received empirical support in academic studies, there seems to be a lack of agreement over which model is the most powerful and whether conditional situations can make one model more suitable than others. Thus, more studies on this topic are required to:

- reconcile the mixed findings on the three existing model types;
- investigate conditional situations in which different models are more suitable for selecting appropriate celebrity endorsers; and
- reveal useful implications for industry practitioners.

In the next section, a review of extant celebrity endorsement literature in the hospitality and tourism industry is presented before implications and directions for future hospitality and tourism research are discussed in Section 4.

3. Findings on celebrity endorsement from the hospitality and tourism literature

Given the increasing popularity of celebrity endorsement in the hospitality and tourism industry, a growing number of scholars have investigated endorsement strategies for hotels ([Herstein and Mitki, 2008](#); [Magnini et al., 2008](#)), restaurants ([Kim et al., 2013](#); [Magnini et al., 2010](#)) and tourism destinations ([Glover, 2009](#); [Lee et al., 2008](#); [Van der Veen and Song, 2014](#); [van der Veen, 2008](#); [van der Veen and Song, 2010](#)). Unfortunately, compared to the rapid advancement on this topic in the general marketing area, this stream of research progressed relatively slower in the hospitality and tourism field. Instead of conceptualizing a modified model of celebrity endorser selection to capture the unique features of the industry, most researchers have used or adapted one or more of the three selection models and focused on testing the impact of celebrity endorsement strategy in the hospitality and tourism industry. Owing to the extant research gaps/disagreements in the general marketing area, the results on celebrity endorsement research in the hospitality and tourism field are rather mixed. Please refer to [Table IV](#) for a list of key empirical hospitality and tourism studies on celebrity endorsement. Luckily, these studies reveal several new constructs associated with celebrity endorsement strategies, which are discussed next.

3.1 Genuine support

Genuine support refers to a situation in which a celebrity truly supports an endorsed product both on and off camera ([Magnini et al., 2008](#)). A celebrity who is involved in the product design also appears to provide genuine support for the endorsed product. It has been

Article	Study context	Study sample	Celebrity selection model(s)	Dependent variable(s)	Key traits of effective celebrity endorsement	Notes
Magnini <i>et al.</i> (2008)	Hospitality firms	US consumers	Source model Match-up hypothesis	N/A	Trustworthiness Expertise Genuine support ^a Match between the celebrity's and company's image and values Reference group (desire to emulate a celebrity endorser) Celebrity involvement (fandom) ^a	Genuine support refers to a situation in which it is known that the celebrity endorser supports the endorsed product both off and on camera. It can increase the celebrity's credibility
Lee <i>et al.</i> (2008)	Tourism destination (Korea)	Japanese visitors	N/A	Destination familiarity Destination image Visit intentions	Celebrity involvement	Celebrity involvement is defined as the "tendency to develop a heightened affection and attachment to a celebrity" (Lee <i>et al.</i> , 2008, p. 813)
Van der Veen (2008)	Tourism	Research experts in the field from the USA	N/A	N/A (a qualitative study)	Product involvement Trustworthiness Expertise	It is suggested that a celebrity endorsement strategy is most effective when the endorsed products are high in social/psychological risk for the consumer
Magnini <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Chain restaurants (full service and quick service)	US consumers	Match-up hypothesis Meaning transfer model	N/A (a qualitative study)	Celebrity power ^a Match between the celebrity's and company's image and values Reference group (ability to relate to a celebrity endorser)	Celebrity power is defined as a celebrity's ability to persuade the audience to respond to the request or position the celebrity is advocating Several demographic differences were revealed in this study: <i>Parents</i> are particularly concerned with an image match; <i>Women and younger customers</i> respond better to a celebrity's physical attractiveness; <i>Older and less frequent diners</i> rely more on a celebrity's trustworthiness

(continued)

Table IV.
Review of key celebrity endorsement studies in hospitality and tourism

Table IV.

Article	Study context	Study sample	Celebrity selection model(s)	Dependent variable(s)	Key traits of effective celebrity endorsement	Notes
Kim <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Hotel (Korea)	Japanese visitors	Source model	Corporate image Corporate credibility Corporate loyalty	Expertise Trustworthiness (partial support) Attractiveness (partial support)	Three celebrities were tested. Respondents chose the one they admired when answering the questions. Trustworthiness was found to be important for two celebrities and attractiveness was important for the other one
Van der Veen and Song (2014)	Tourism destination (Hong Kong)	Chinese visitors	Source model	Attitude toward the advertisement Attitude toward the destination	Match between the celebrity's and destination's image Believability (comprised of expertise and trustworthiness) Attractiveness Ability to relate to US visitors Match between the celebrity's and destination's image N/A (a segmentation study)	The results suggest that native celebrity endorsers (e.g. Maggie Cheung) are more effective spokespersons for Hong Kong than non-natives (e.g. Britney Spears)
Johns <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Tourism destination (Australia)	US visitors	N/A	Visit intentions N/A (a qualitative study)		The results suggest that females are more likely to be influenced by the Oprah campaign, indicating the importance of demographic analysis in celebrity endorsement research
McCartney and Pinto (2014)	Tourism Destination (Macao)	Chinese visitors	N/A	Awareness Recall Image perception Destination choice		No particular celebrity was named in the study. The authors investigated differences in visitors' perceptions and destination decision-making among different segments. For example, younger travelers and middle-income earners are more likely to be influenced by celebrity endorsers in their travel decisions
Yen and Teng (2015)	Media-induced tourism	Taiwanese visitors	N/A	Visit intentions	Celebrity involvement	Popular media-induced tourism is perceived as a new form of cultural tourism, and is defined as tourist visits to a destination with strong connections to films or TV shows

Notes: ^aRepresents a new trait of an effective celebrity endorser not previously discussed in the review of the general marketing literature

suggested that genuine support can be particularly important in the hospitality and tourism industry owing to the high psychological and social risks associated with purchasing intangible services (e.g. selecting a restaurant for an important business lunch or planning a honeymoon trip). Meanwhile, as consumers cannot feel, touch or try the products before making a purchase, they tend to rely more on external cues. In this case, the celebrity endorser serves as a reliable external cue; the logic behind genuine support suggests that if the celebrity actually uses the hospitality service he/she endorses, consumers will have higher confidence in the product and be more likely to use the services (Magnini *et al.*, 2008).

However, the empirical evidence on genuine support is rather limited. Magnini *et al.* (2008) used a single item measurement in their study, thus limiting the result validity. In one of their later studies, genuine support was not an important predictor of effective endorsement (Magnini *et al.*, 2010). Further investigation is needed on this construct to reach a solid conclusion.

3.2 Celebrity involvement

Lee *et al.* (2008) introduced a term called *celebrity involvement* based on the concept of leisure involvement. Viewing celebrities as a source of leisure activity, they defined celebrity involvement as “the tendency to develop a heightened affection and attachment to a celebrity” (p. 813). There are three dimensions of celebrity involvement, namely, attraction, centrality and self-expression. *Attraction* refers to the perceived importance of a celebrity in a person’s life and the pleasure derived from activities related to that celebrity. *Centrality* is defined as the relative importance of a celebrity’s role in a person’s overall life. *Self-expression* is to the extent to which activities related to a celebrity enable an individual to express a desired image (Lee *et al.*, 2008; McIntyre and Pigram, 1992; Yen and Teng, 2015). Yen and Teng (2015) demonstrated a positive relationship between celebrity involvement and behavioral intentions that is partially mediated by perceived value. While Lee *et al.* (2008) hypothesized that celebrity involvement can have a positive impact on a destination’s image and further lead to a higher likelihood of visiting that destination, the relationship was not supported in their study. Kim and Richardson (2003) also failed to reveal a significant relationship between the level of empathic involvement with film celebrities and destination image.

3.3 Celebrity power

Magnini *et al.* (2010) proposed a new construct called *celebrity power* and defined it as a celebrity’s ability to persuade or influence the audience. In other words, a person with strong celebrity power is able to make an individual respond to his/her requests (Byrne *et al.*, 2003). Celebrities who are popular, famous, trendy, attractive and/or fashionable are powerful. Sometimes celebrity power can be so strong that it is the only selection criterion for an endorser. According to Magnini *et al.* (2010), celebrity power is most likely associated with physical attractiveness, but future research is needed to better understand this concept. Specifically, what are the predictors of celebrity power (e.g. attractiveness, expertise, popularity) and how can it be measured (e.g. likeability, persuasiveness, number of fans)?

3.4 Reference group

One element missing in the original meaning transfer model is the association between a celebrity endorser and the target audience. Magnini *et al.* (2008, 2010) used the term *reference group* to explain the importance of consumer relatability for a celebrity endorser.

A reference group is defined as any person, group or institution that an individual uses as a point of reference. In general, there are two types of reference groups, namely, *membership groups*, of which one is already a member, and *aspirational groups*, of which one desires to be a member.

A chosen celebrity can be an effective endorser when a target audience perceives his/her as a part of their membership group (i.e. as reflecting their beliefs and lifestyle). In such cases, group members tend to buy the endorsed product/brand to maintain and/or strengthen their group identity. Similarly, a celebrity endorser can serve as an aspirational figure for target consumers who desire to be associated with that person in the future. In such cases, an endorsed product/brand becomes a symbolic signal and consumers tend to purchase that endorsed product/brand to emulate their favorite celebrities.

Results in the extant literature on the relative importance of membership versus aspirational reference groups are mixed. [Magnini et al. \(2008\)](#) suggested that consumers' desire to emulate a celebrity endorser is a significant predictor of effective endorsement, whereas [Magnini et al. \(2010\)](#) found that the relatability of a celebrity endorser to consumers increases endorsement effectiveness. Such mixed findings could be owing to the use of different industry contexts, research methods and study samples. Therefore, in the future, researchers should conduct more systematic investigations on the impact of reference group type on effective celebrity endorsement.

In summary, hospitality and tourism celebrity endorsement research has made good progress over the past decade, with several new constructs being revealed and tested. Scholars have investigated the effects of celebrity endorsements on both Western and East Asian consumers in various contexts, including hotels, restaurants and tourism destinations. However, the findings in the hospitality and tourism endorsement literature are rather mixed and inconclusive because industry features have not been systematically examined and study contexts and samples have varied widely (as shown in [Table IV](#)). For example, expertise was found to be an important characteristic of effective celebrity endorsers in the hotel industry ([Kim et al., 2014](#)) but not in the restaurant industry (full service and quick service) ([Magnini et al., 2010](#)). Moreover, only one study in the tourism field yielded evidence that celebrity believability (composed of expertise and trustworthiness) is an important trait of effective endorsement ([Van der Veen and Song, 2014](#)). Similarly, attractiveness was demonstrated to be important in one tourism destination endorsement study ([Van der Veen and Song, 2014](#)) but was only partially significant in a hotel endorsement study ([Kim et al., 2014](#)). Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop a more comprehensive model of celebrity endorser selection in the hospitality and tourism field encompassing different contexts (e.g. tourism destinations, restaurants, hotels, airlines) and service levels (e.g. luxury, mid-scale, budget). A new celebrity endorser selection model with several future research directions is discussed in the next section.

4. Directions for future research on celebrity endorsement

4.1 An extended meaning transfer model

Based on the extant literature on celebrity endorsement, the meaning transfer model clearly serves as the foundation for effective celebrity endorser selection but still suffers from the lack of consistent empirical supports. Therefore, with the aim to reconcile the mixed findings on the celebrity endorser selection models, the author proposes an extended meaning transfer model in this paper by incorporating the essence of the match-up hypothesis and the reference group concept.

The meaning transfer model is based on the assumption that consumers tend to purchase products to communicate an image or identity. During the endorsement process, cultural meaning transfers from a celebrity to a product to consumers. According to the reference group literature, it is important to match consumers' desired images with the celebrity's perceived image. In fact, any given celebrity may have more than one symbolic property, and different groups of consumers may have different perceptions about that celebrity (Till, 1998). In other words, different individuals may seek different symbolic properties from a celebrity endorser and form unique associations to signal their actual or desired self-images depending on their personalities and the consumption context (Sirgy, 1983).

In addition to matching consumers' self-images, the celebrity's perceived image should match the endorsed product attribute based on the match-up hypothesis. In fact, these two matches have been recognized and used by advertisers in the field. Erdogan and Baker (2000) interviewed employees of 12 advertising agencies in the UK to shed light on how practitioners select celebrity endorsers. Their results suggest that finding a celebrity that suits a campaign (i. e. a match between the celebrity and the product) and capturing a target audience's feelings toward a celebrity (i.e. a match between the celebrity's perceived image and consumers' self-images) are the two most important criteria used in the industry. Incorporating the essence of the reference group concept and the match-up hypothesis into the current model of celebrity endorser selection yields an *extended meaning transfer model* with two propositions. Please see Figure 1 for a visual illustration:

- P1. The effect of a celebrity endorser will be stronger when there is a match (vs mismatch) between the celebrity's perceived image and the target consumers' existing or desired self-images.
- P2. The effect of a celebrity endorser will be stronger when there is a match (vs mismatch) between the celebrity's perceived image and the endorsed hospitality product's image.

4.2 Conditional effect of the extended meaning transfer model: an identity signaling approach

The underlying premise of the extended meaning transfer model is that consumers tend to appropriate the symbolic property of a brand to construct their self-identities. However, studies show that some purchase choices signal identities better than others (Berger, 2016). For example, people are more likely to use publicly consumed products than privately

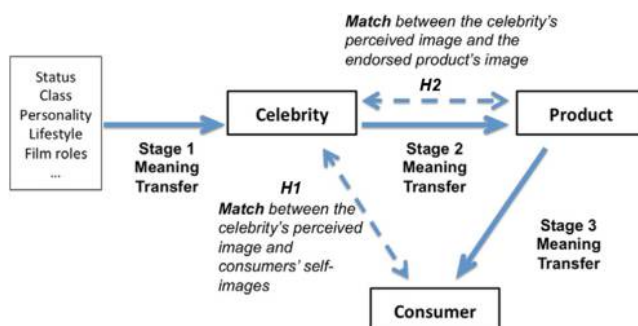


Figure 1.
An extended
meaning transfer
model of celebrity
endorsement

consumed products to construct their self-identities; similarly, consumers tend to purchase luxury products rather than necessities to signal their desired images.

When consumers use endorsed products to signal identities, it is appropriate to use the extended meaning transfer model to select an effective endorser. To effectively portray their images, consumers will be more likely to choose an endorsed product when the celebrity's image matches their existing or desired self-images. On the other hand, when there is a mismatch, the celebrity endorser may trigger negative effects. Results in the extant literature suggest that consumers tend to avoid choices associated with a dissimilar group (Berger, 2008; Berger and Heath, 2007, 2008; Yang and Mattila, 2014). For example, a competitor of Gucci sent Nicole Polizzi (a.k.a. Snooki on the reality show *Jersey Shore*) a brand new Gucci handbag to contaminate Gucci's image among members of its target market. Similarly, Abercrombie & Fitch paid Michael Sorrentino (another *Jersey Shore* star) *not* to wear the brand on the show. Likewise, Yang *et al.* (2016) suggested that consumers who use luxury hotels to signal social status tend to exhibit unfavorable reactions when such hotels attempt to attract less affluent consumers by implementing price promotions on discount websites. Taken together, the following two propositions are proposed:

- P3. When consumers use an endorsed hospitality product to signal identity, the effect of a celebrity endorser will be positive when a celebrity's perceived image is congruent with target consumers' existing or desired self-images.
- P4. When consumers use an endorsed hospitality product to signal identity, the effect of a celebrity endorser will be negative when a celebrity's perceived image is incongruent with target consumers' existing or desired self-images.

Berger (2016) suggested that consumption products can be seen as more identity relevant the less they are based on function. For example, both luxury hotels and budget hotels provide similar basic utility: a room to stay in for a night. But luxury hotels offer much more than basic functionality (e.g. lavish décor, personalized service, luxury amenities). Consequently, people tend to make identity inferences based on luxury hotel choices rather than budget hotel choices. Berger (2016) further argued that when consumption choices are based on personal tastes and lifestyles, individuals are more likely to infer identity from such choices. In the context of tourism and hospitality service, in addition to luxury (e.g. luxury hotels and resorts, fine dining restaurants), other lifestyle or trend-related characteristics can also be highly associated with consumers' personal images (e.g. lifestyle hotels such as Kimpton, Moxy and Indigo). Therefore, in the future, it will be interesting and important for researchers to investigate which types of products and services (hotel and restaurant brands, tourism destinations, etc.) are more likely to be used to signal identity in hospitality and tourism contexts and to apply the extended meaning transfer model to test the propositions.

4.3 Unique features of hospitality and tourism products

Yang and Mattila (2014) compared tangible goods and intangible services and suggested that compared to tangible products, hospitality services are more difficult to display and thus may not be an ideal option for signaling purposes. In other words, many hospitality and tourism products can be perceived as identity irrelevant (e.g. going to McDonald's for a quick bite; sitting in economy-class seat on a United flight). In such cases, the simple source model may be appropriate for selecting effective endorsers.

The importance of the three factors in source models (attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise) can vary depending on the unique features of hospitality and tourism products and services. In general, hospitality services and material possessions are fundamentally different. Hospitality services are mainly intangible, variable in quality and perishable. Such unique features must be taken into consideration when selecting an endorser for a hospitality business. For example, consumers cannot try/touch/taste a hospitality product (e.g. a hotel room, a flight) prior to purchase. When they make an important or unfamiliar purchase, source credibility can be more important than source attractiveness in selecting an endorser (Kim *et al.*, 2014; Magnini *et al.*, 2008; Van der Veen, 2008). On the other hand, when social/psychological risks associated with a purchase decision are low (e.g. finding a motel to stay in for one night, purchasing a meal from a quick-service restaurant), attractiveness may overshadow the effect of source credibility (Magnini *et al.*, 2010; Van der Veen and Song, 2014). A main reason why findings in the extant literature are mixed is because scholars have overlooked the unique features of different hospitality and tourism products and services. Therefore, it is vital for scholars to consider these unique features in future research to investigate endorser selection for identity-irrelevant products in a more systematic manner:

- P5. When consumers do not use an endorsed hospitality product to signal identity, source models will be more appropriate for selecting effective endorsers than the extended meaning transfer model.
- P6. The unique features of hospitality and tourism consumption (e.g. level of perceived psychological and social risk) will moderate the importance of the three factors in source models (attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise).

4.4 Cultural differences

A recent report shows that about 70-75 per cent of Korean ads include celebrities, as opposed to 10-15 per cent in most other developed countries (Turnbull, 2012). In fact, the top three countries for celebrity endorsement usage are South Korea, Japan and Malaysia (Praet *et al.*, 2009). More interestingly, most of the time the celebrities featured in advertisements in East Asian countries have no direct connections to the products they endorse (e.g. a singer endorses a bank) and some popular celebrities can endorse numerous products. Song Joong-ki, a popular Korean actor, endorsed more than 20 products/brands in Korea and China in 2016 including but not limited to clothes, skincare products, toothpaste, cell phones, household appliances, beer, soft drinks, ice cream, pizza, an airline, duty free shops as well as the Korea Tourism Organization. Such a phenomenon is rare in the USA and is difficult to explain based on the existing celebrity endorsement literature. It is impossible to argue that Song Joong-ki is an expert on all of the various products he endorses, ranging from toothpaste to a tourism destination; it is also difficult to argue that Song Joong-ki's image matches all of the endorsed brands. Extant literature actually suggests that endorsing too many brands may reduce a celebrity's credibility and likeability, and consequently lead to lower brand evaluations (Mowen *et al.*, 1979; Mowen and Brown, 1981). Clearly, this is not the case in Korea and some other Asian countries.

Unfortunately, the majority of celebrity endorsement studies have been performed in Western countries and the culture dimension has long been overlooked. It is not clear how and why such a multiple endorsement strategy can work in East Asian countries. Mooij (1998) argued that culture should be integrated as an important variable in social science

theories and research. Some major cultural differences between Eastern and Western cultures include Hofstede's individualism/collectivism dimension and Hall's context-based (high vs low) cultural communication dimension. Such differences may play an important role in celebrity endorser selection in different cultures.

For example, a recent study conducted by [Um and Lee \(2015\)](#) revealed that Korean advertising practitioners consider a celebrity's likeability to be the most important criterion when choosing a celebrity endorser in Korea. This finding is surprising and contradicts findings in the existing literature suggesting that the most important selection criteria tend to be the match between the celebrity and the product, and the celebrity's credibility ([Erdogan et al., 2001](#); [Erdogan and Baker, 2000](#); [Miciak and Shanklin, 1994](#)). [Um and Lee \(2015\)](#) argued that their findings could be related to unique characteristics of Eastern culture. In collectivist cultures such as Korea, consumers tend to view celebrities as public figures who have the values and outlook embraced by society, whereas in individualist cultures such as the USA and Canada, consumers view celebrities as unique individuals who have different personalities and lifestyles. In other words, in Eastern culture, a celebrity endorser may be viewed as a socially approved individual, while in Western culture, a celebrity endorser tends to be viewed as a unique individual ([Choi et al., 2005](#)). Therefore, likeability tends to be the single most important criterion in selecting a celebrity endorser in East Asian countries.

In the future, it will be important for scholars to capture cultural differences and incorporate appropriate cultural dimensions in cross-cultural hospitality and tourism celebrity endorsement studies. Considering the heightened popularity of using celebrity endorsers in East Asian countries, this line of research has great potential to yield both theoretical and practical contributions.

4.5 Other future research topics

4.5.1 Celebrity restaurants. Celebrity restaurants also warrant future attention. In recent years, an increasing number of celebrities have created and promoted their own brands. In addition to myriad consumer goods (e.g. perfumes, clothing lines), many celebrities have invested in restaurants and served as spokespersons for their own businesses. Unfortunately, many celebrities' attempts to extend their brands have not fared well and it seems that a celebrity's name does not guarantee a restaurant's success ([Myers, 2014](#)). Several celebrity restaurants have closed, e.g. Steven Spielberg's submarine-themed restaurant, Dive!, closed in 1999; Jennifer Lopez's Latin restaurant, Madre's, closed in 2008; and Britney Spears's New York City eatery, Nyla, a combination of New York and Louisiana-style food, closed in less than six months owing to problems, including a lack of clear market positioning, health-code violations and mismanagement ([Yang and Mattila, 2016](#)).

Although some scholars have investigated celebrity restaurants, they have focused mainly on operational strategies and business models rather than celebrity endorsement ([Henderson, 2011](#); [Jones, 2009](#); [Morgan and Edwards, 2011](#)). In the celebrity restaurant context, celebrity owners are endorsing their own restaurants; thus, several factors from the celebrity endorsement literature should be considered. For example, a celebrity's expertise and level of involvement may play important roles in a business's success. When a celebrity is perceived to be an expert in gastronomy or highly involved in the development and operation of his/her business, consumers may exhibit favorable attitudes and behavioral intentions toward the restaurant. This may partially explain the popularity of celebrity chef restaurants. A celebrity chef is "someone with a professional background who enjoys a certain element of recognition domestically and possibly globally, unconfined to the world of

expensive restaurants" (Henderson, 2011, p. 617). Compared to other types of celebrities such as movie stars and athletes, celebrity chefs are renowned for their cooking and more involved in restaurant operations. Many celebrity chefs, such as Mario Batali, Wolfgang Puck, Gordon Ramsay and Jamie Oliver, run successful restaurant chains; some have even extended their businesses overseas. Therefore, in the future, it will be valuable for scholars to examine the topic of celebrity restaurants from an endorsement perspective and investigate the impact of endorsement factors (e.g. expertise, fit with product category, level of involvement) on the businesses' success.

4.5.2 Servicescape and celebrity endorsement. Servicescape (i.e. the physical environment and customer-to-customer interactions) could be another interesting topic for future scholars. As stated by Byrne *et al.* (2003), while the process of celebrity endorsement is quite clear-cut for manufacturers, its influence goes further in the services industry, which features abundant experiences and variable service quality. As servicescape is an essential element of service delivery in the hospitality industry, a match between a celebrity and an endorsed product may extend to servicescape perceptions. In other words, the image of a hotel, restaurant or destination may need to reinforce the attributes conveyed by the celebrity endorser and create a match between the consumption environment and value projected by the celebrity.

4.5.3 Service quality and celebrity endorsement. Investigating service quality issues could also be a fruitful direction for researchers in the future. The majority of extant studies focus on the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumers' attitudes toward an advertisement, attitudes toward the product/brand, product/brand evaluations and purchase intentions/behaviors. However, it is not clear whether the impact of celebrity endorsement can spill over to post-consumption reactions. For example, can consumers' strong emotional connections with a celebrity attenuate the negative impact caused by service failures? Fleck *et al.* (2012) suggested that positive affect toward a celebrity could lead to a halo effect for consumption experiences. For instance, someone who is a big fan of a certain celebrity may have positive affect toward an endorsed product, regardless of the product/service quality. In other words, consumption satisfaction in such cases would stem from the positive association with the celebrity endorser, rather than the actual product attributes.

If such a halo effect does occur, what types of attributes (e.g. attractiveness, likeability and expertise) can trigger such an effect? If not, do (frequent) service failures trigger a reverse transfer process that negatively impacts celebrity endorsers? Unfortunately, little research has been performed on the reverse transfer process from brands to celebrities (Doss, 2011; Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta, 2010; Till, 2001). When the extended meaning transfer model is applied to celebrity endorser selection, it is highly possible that a reciprocal meaning transfer process could emerge, meaning that the repeated pairing of a product/brand and a celebrity endorser could create a celebrity-brand alliance (Till, 1998), meaning that perceptions about the endorsed product/brand would influence the endorser in the same direction. In addition, should endorsers be liable for their endorsements? For example, after an outbreak of food safety issues in China, the government began to hold celebrity endorsers accountable for the products/brands they endorse (Choi *et al.*, 2005). As service failures are almost inevitable in the hospitality and tourism industry, it appears that much research is needed in this area to gauge a better understanding of celebrity endorsement as a marketing strategy.

5. Concluding remarks

Given the large sums of money involved in celebrity endorsement strategies and the potential risks associated with selecting inappropriate celebrity endorsers, developing a systematic model for selecting an appropriate celebrity endorser is an imperative, yet difficult task (Choi and Rifon, 2012; Erdogan and Baker, 2000). Luckily, celebrity endorsement research has a long history in the general marketing literature and has advanced significantly over the past several decades. Benefits and risks of celebrity endorsement have been well documented, and three types of models for celebrity endorser selection have been proposed and tested. Although hospitality and tourism businesses have received less attention than product-focused organizations, a growing number of scholars have begun to investigate celebrity endorsement strategies in relation to hotels, restaurants and tourism destinations in recent years.

With the intention to spark more discussions and attentions on the celebrity endorsement research in the hospitality and tourism field, the present study provides a holistic examination of the evolution of celebrity endorsement research in both the general marketing and hospitality and tourism fields. Based on the critical review of current research findings, this article proposes an extended meaning transfer model with the intention to reconcile the mixed results on celebrity endorser selection literature. Moreover, an identity signaling approach was used to investigate the conditional effect of the extended meaning transfer model. The proposed propositions in this article will serve as conceptual foundations for future scholars to empirically test a more appropriate celebrity endorser selection model in the hospitality and tourism field. In addition, to facilitate hospitality and tourism scholars to advance this stream of research, several future research directions were identified to capture the unique features of the hospitality and tourism industry such as servicescape and service quality issues.

Several limitations in this article need to be recognized. First, only peer-reviewed journal articles were considered, and the referenced work is intended to be representative of the celebrity endorsement research. In addition, only full-length articles that were published in English are included in this article. Although a systematic approach was adopted to find and retrieve as many articles as possible, it is possible that some relevant articles were not accessed. Second, due to the limited amount of research on celebrity endorsement in the field of hospitality and tourism, this paper mainly aims at providing a comprehensive review on the topic in both the general marketing and hospitality and tourism areas. Therefore, this paper grouped tourism and hospitality research domains together and did not address the unique characteristics in each industry (e.g. geo-political, social-cultural and economic factors that are specific to an industry). Future scholar may consider focusing on one particular domain and examining contextual differences between the two industries. In addition, with a growing number of studies on celebrity endorsement in the hospitality and tourism field, future scholars may use a quantitative content analysis approach to report topical, methodological and/or authorship trends as suggested by Jang and Park (2011), which will lead to a clearer picture of celebrity endorsement applications in the field.

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