The relationship between celebrities’ credibility and advertising effectiveness
The mediation role of religiosity

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Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this study is twofold, first, the study aimed at investigating the impact of celebrities’ credibility on advertising effectiveness by examining the celebrity attributes that are likely to influence consumer attitude towards celebrity-endorsed TV advertising and their purchase behaviour. Second, the study seeks to identify the mediating role of religiosity on consumers’ attitudes towards celebrity-endorsed television advertising and buying behaviour.

Design/methodology/approach – The study is based on a survey questionnaire in a sample of 370 Sudanese customers on their attitude towards the celebrity endorsement of television advertising.

Findings – The study found that celebrities’ likeability and their attractiveness have the greatest impact on both consumers’ attitude and their purchase behaviour. The study also confirms that religiosity partially mediate both the relationships between celebrities’ credibility and the attitude towards the advertisement and purchase behaviour and revealed that religiosity correlates negatively with celebrities’ credibility and attitude towards advertisement.

Research limitations/implications – However, the study has some limitations, as it investigates the effectiveness of celebrities’ endorsement in TV commercials only. Future research could be extended to investigate the effectiveness of using celebrities advertising on other different media such as radio, printed and outdoors media. Further, the study uses a scale based on the Islamic practice dimensions, and using a more comprehensive scale to measure religiosity based on both belief and practices maybe a further extension.

Practical implications – These results have important implications for advertising practitioners and business enterprises in Sudan, and other similar communities. They provide guidance in the sense that religiosity should be weighed in and given high importance when using celebrities in advertising campaigns and that the advertisement contents should be compliant with the Islamic law (Shariah).

Social implications – Understanding how religious beliefs influence the attitude towards the advertising is of great importance to international advertisers to improve advertising effectiveness without offending their Muslim audience. The study enriches the literature on the religiosity and its influence on the consumer behaviour, particularly in the celebrity-endorsed advertisements.

Originality/value – To the best of the authors knowledge, this study is the first study of its kind in Sudan to explore the impact of celebrities’ endorsement on consumers attitude and buying behaviour and provide empirical evidence to verify the existence of a mediating role of religiosity on both the attitude and purchase behaviour in the Sudanese context. It provides an understanding of Sudanese
attitudes and purchase decision, as Muslims, and thus provides practitioners with guidelines on how to design celebrity-endorsed TV advertisements to influence consumers’ attitude and buying behaviour.

**Keywords** Islamic business ethics, Advertisements and promotions, Islamic marketing, Islamic market segmentation, The Muslim consumer, Advertising effectiveness

**Paper type** Research paper

**Introduction**

The increasing competition among firms to attract more consumers to their products and services has encouraged marketers to hire celebrities to endorse their products. The process of celebrities’ endorsement for companies’ products and services entails investment of significant amounts of money. Because of their fame, celebrities such as actors, singers and athletes serve not only to create and maintain attention, but also to achieve high recall rates for advertising messages in today’s highly cluttered environments (Ohanian, 1991). Endorsed advertisements have been considered as an effective marketing tool by advertisers and their agencies since many decades ago (Low Swee-Foon and Lim Su-Wen, 2012). Dix *et al.* (2010) further elaborated that the influence of a celebrity is so powerful that businesses are willing to set aside millions of dollars for endorsement deals. This is mainly because of the celebrity’s ability to capture the attention of consumers in an advertisement among the cluttered streams of messages (Kamins *et al*., 1989). The large amount of money spent by businesses is solely for the sake of hoping that it will positively influence the targeted consumers’ behaviours and attitudes towards the product or service. It is argued that celebrity endorsement influences advertising effectiveness, brand recognition, brand recall, purchase intentions and even purchase behaviour (Spry *et al*., 2011).

Sudan is a less developed, multiracial and multicultural country with African and Arabs groups where Muslims from both races represent the majority (97 per cent of its population). Islamic law and Shariah rules form the foundation of the political, judicial, economic and social systems. As such, Islam plays a significant role in shaping people’s views and values and governing their attitudes and behaviour. Regulations controlling public media are deeply influenced by Islamic principles. Forms or contents that contradict religion, traditions, public ethics and morals are not allowed. Using celebrity endorsers in TV advertising is not a popular practice in Sudan. However, it has been a noticeable phenomenon over the past few years. More Sudanese businesses have started using famous female singers and actors in promoting goods and services. Currently, a debate is going on concerning issuing a law to prohibit portraying women in advertising media in Sudan.

Although Islam does not prohibit advertising to promote products and services, using celebrities, especially women, in advertising may contradict Muslims principles and be considered offensive. Women in Islam are not allowed to expose any part of the body except face, hands and feet (The Holy Quran, 24:31). Showing any part except the aforementioned is considered as a sexual stimulant and thus inappropriate for public presentation (Chachula *et al*., 2009). All advertising messages that follow the Islamic teachings propagate good morals such as women in decent manner and clothing assuming their role as a positive contribution to the family and society as a whole, as opposed to being used as objects of sexual desire (Rice and Al-Mossawi, 2002). According to Abdullah and Ahmad (2010), the religious background has an influence on the perceptions of the Muslim consumers as to the degree of adherence to the Islamic...
principles among businesses. This is especially so with respect to the use of vulgar languages and deceptive means in advertising, and the use of celebrities in advertisements. Moreover, testimonials and endorsements of celebrities or authorities echoed frequently, even though they are not bonafide users of the products. Muslim marketers should give or show only those testimonials that come from competent, honest and real users of the products (Anwar and Saeed, 2013).

Hence, the objective of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of using celebrities in television commercials, and more importantly, to detect whether the celebrity-endorsed advertisement has any significant impact on Sudanese attitude and purchase behaviour. The paper also examines the celebrity credibility attributes likely to influence consumer attitude and purchase behaviour. In addition, the study seeks to identify the mediating role of religiosity on consumers’ attitudes towards “celebrity-endorsed television advertising” and their buying behaviour, to provide guidance to advertising companies with respect to the effectiveness of celebrity-endorsed advertising in influencing Muslim consumers’ attitude and buying behaviour in Sudan.

A major contribution of this study lies in understanding the relationship among religious commitment, celebrities’ credibility, attitude and purchase intention in the Sudanese prospective. Its significance, however, lies in the absence of studies addressing this issue in Sudan. Also, the study will increase the understanding of the Sudanese (as a product of Arabic and Islamic culture) attitude towards this marketing issue.

In the next section, a review of the relevant literature and the research model is provided. The section after details the methodology used to empirically investigate the hypotheses, followed by analysis and discussion of the results. Finally, the study discusses the implications and limitations of this research and suggestions for future research.

Theoretical background and literature review

Celebrities’ endorsement

Celebrities’ endorsement is the most widely used strategy of using celebrities as a promotional tool. The endorsement can have a celebrity giving expert opinions, being a spokesperson for a product or just being associated with a product (McCracken, 1989). A celebrity is a well-known personality who enjoys public recognition by a large share of a certain group of people (Schlecht, 2003). Because a communicator’s role is very crucial in advertising, it is important for the advertiser to select good communicators who are able to affect consumer’s perception and change their attitude towards the companies and their products and services. Celebrities are more effective than other endorsers, such as the professional expert, the company manager or the typical consumer (Friedman and Friedman, 1979). Celebrities are generally viewed by consumers as credible sources of information about the product or the firm they endorse (Goldsmith et al., 2000). Credibility is an important factor to be considered during celebrity endorsement, as message effectiveness will be stronger when the credibility of the endorser is higher (Sternthal et al., 1978).

Celebrity endorsement effectiveness

In developing scales to measure the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement, the literature exploring celebrity endorsements effectiveness has generally used two foundational source models as being the most important in the context of celebrities:
In effect, if consumers perceive a celebrity endorser as similar to them and they are familiar with and like the celebrity, they will tend to find the celebrity more attractive. Later, Shimp (2010) further subdivided source credibility and source attractiveness into five important aspects: trustworthiness, expertise (both constitute credibility), physical attractiveness, respect and similarity to target audience (the three components of attractiveness) to develop his TEARS model. Each of these models repeats some basic attributes, the stability of which allows the suggestion of these being a foundation for celebrity endorsement selection. For the present study, five dimensions were chosen from the literature to measure celebrities’ credibility, namely, expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, likeability and respect, that were used as hypothesized dimensions of celebrity endorsers’ credibility. Source familiarity (knowledge of the source through exposure) and similarity (resemblance between the source and the receiver of the message) were not used in the development of the study model, as they are subsumed within the attractiveness construct and very related to likeability (Moreland and Zajonc, 1982). Familiar people were regarded by the subjects as both more likeable and more similar to themselves. Following is a discussion of these dimensions.

Expertise can be defined as the perceived ability of an endorser to make or provide valid assertions. It includes the knowledge, experience and skills developed by the endorser while working in the same field. Ohanian (1990) argued that the perceived expertise of celebrity endorsers is more important than their attractiveness and trustworthiness in influencing purchase intentions. Expert celebrities are found to be more persuasive and may influence the consumer buying decision (Ohanian 1991). Homer and Kahle (1990) pointed that source expertise can act as a central persuasion cue under certain conditions (i.e. print media).

Trustworthiness refers to the honesty, integrity and believability of an endorser. Ohanian (1990) defined trustworthiness as “the listener’s degree of confidence in, and level of acceptance of, the speaker and the message”. Trustworthiness of an endorser is perceptual and depends on the target audience. Marketers take the advantage of these set of values by employing celebrities who are regarded as most trustworthy, honest, believable and dependable among their fans and people (Shimp, 1997). Prior research implies that both source expertise and trustworthiness may make independent contributions to source effectiveness (Mowen and Minor, 2006).

Likeability is the liking for the endorser that the consumer inculcated because of the qualification, outward appearance and conduct of the endorser (McGuire, 1969). It is the affection for the source because of the source’s physical appearance and behaviour (Erdogan, 1999). This study uses likeability as a separate construct distinct from endorser attractiveness. This choice is based on the outcomes of many prior studies. Maddux and Rogers (1980) argued that likeability had a greater impact on attitude change than other variables. Freiden (1984) found that a celebrity spokesperson for a TV set generated higher values for the likeability of the spokesperson when compared to advertisements featuring an expert, a typical consumer or a CEO. Further, Walker and...
Dubitsky (1994) argued that likeability has an important role to play in facilitating consumer responsiveness towards advertising, thereby creating the opportunity to develop an effective commercial, which can lead to favourable attitudes towards the advertiser or the advertised brand. In a similar study, Friedman and Friedman (1979) showed that likeability is the most important attribute of trust. They argued that advertisers select personalities who are well liked, when a trustworthy celebrity is desired to endorse brands.

Attractiveness which refers to all characteristics that make an endorser attractive to audience members (e.g. physical look, personality properties, attractive lifestyle, etc.) is suggested by Ohanian (1990) as a third component of source credibility in the advertising context. The decision to use attractiveness is further motivated by the fact that attractiveness has become an important factor through the increasing use of celebrities as endorsers for products and services. Many studies have identified attractiveness as an important indicator of advertising effectiveness (Chao et al., 2005; Till and Busler, 2000) and have a great impact on consumer attitude towards advertising and brand (Sallam and Wahid, 2012). Joseph (1982) examined the impact of endorser attractiveness on opinion change, product evaluation and other measures of effectiveness. The study concluded that attractive endorsers have a more positive impact on the products they endorse than less attractive endorsers. Hudha and Hidayat (2009) found that the attractiveness of celebrity-based TV advertising is likely to have a positive relationship with consumers, and celebrity-based TV advertising is likely to have a positive influence towards consumers’ brand choice behaviour in Indonesia. Khong and Wu (2013) examined the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumers’ behavioural intentions in Malaysia. The findings showed that source attractiveness and credibility are essential for celebrity endorsement effectiveness. On the other hand, Shimp (2010) writes that there are two general attributes of credibility (in term of trustworthiness and expertise) and attractiveness that play an important role in facilitating communications effectively. These attributes are also important when it comes to determining how effective an endorser may be.

Respect refers to the quality of being admired or esteemed because of an endorser’s overall accomplishments. Celebrities can be respected for their acting abilities, athletic skills, political arguments and personality. A respected celebrity who endorses a brand can improve a brand’s equity via the positive effect the consumers may get towards the brand (Shimp, 2000).

Advertising effectiveness
Advertising effectiveness is defined as the extent to which advertising generates a certain desired effect on the formulation process of attention, memory, attitude and behaviour. Traditionally, advertising effectiveness is measured by attitude towards advertisement and buying behaviour. The link between attitudes, intentions and behaviour has been explained primarily by the theory of reasoned action developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) which postulates that beliefs influence attitude and social norms which in turn shape behavioural intention guiding or even dictating an individual’s behaviour. The theory has been applied extensively in predicting and explaining behaviour across many domains and human behaviours. Ajzen defined attitude towards a behaviour as the individual’s positive or negative feelings about performing that behaviour. Whereas, attitude towards advertisements is defined as
“mental states which are used by individuals to organize the way they perceive their environment and control the way they respond to it” (Aaker et al., 1995). Kotler (2000) stated that “an attitude is a person’s enduring favorable or unfavorable evaluations, emotional feelings, and action tendencies toward some object or idea”. There is a considerable correlation between desirable attitudes with regard to advertising and rating of certain advertisements by respondents as being likeable, irritating, delightful, etc. Research has demonstrated that celebrity endorsement affects consumers’ feelings in general and it could affect the attitude of consumers towards the advertisement and brands too. This could result in enhancing purchase intentions and thus enhancing sales (Bauer and Greyser, 1968).

On the other hand, purchase intention is defined as “how likely it is that the individual would purchase the product” (Phelps and Hoy, 1996, p. 90) or the predisposition to buy a certain brand or product (Belch and Belch, 2004). Ohanian (1991) found that two dimensions, namely, trustworthiness and attractiveness of endorser credibility, have an insignificant effect on respondents’ purchase intention, while the expertise dimension has a significant effect on respondents’ purchase intention. Goldsmith et al. (2000) found that endorser credibility has indirect relationship with purchase intention through attitude towards the advertisement, and this happens when the consumer possesses affective response towards the advertisement and consequently forms positive purchase intention towards the company’s product or service. Previous research on celebrity endorsement reveals that celebrity endorsers produced more positive attitudes towards advertising and greater purchase intentions than a non-celebrity endorser, and that the higher the perceived credibility of an endorser, the more effective the advertising tends to be (Ohanian, 1991).

Pughazhendi and Ravindran (2012) studied the influence of using celebrity endorsements on consumer buying behaviour and product choice in Tamil Nadu, India. The result of his study found that the respondents were influenced by celebrity product endorsement in terms of buying decision process or product choice. He claimed that celebrity endorsement positively gives more visibility to the product endorsed. Celebrities have always been the easiest way to attract the customers because of their mass appeal.

In the context of Arabs’ attitude towards celebrities’ endorsement, Sallam and Wahid (2012) studied source credibility and its effect on attitude towards the advertisement of Yemeni’ consumers and found that attractiveness is the more significant component of endorser credibility in enhancing the consumers’ attitude towards advertising which leads to effect on consumer’s attitude towards the brand that forms consumer’s purchase intention. For, Saudi consumers, trustworthiness was found to be a significant component of corporate credibility rather than expertise, and attractiveness is the more significant component of endorser credibility rather than expertise and trustworthiness (Sallam, 2011).

Religiosity
Religion is one of the most universal and influential social institution that has a significant influence on people’s attitudes, values and behaviours at both the individual and societal levels (Mokhlis, 2009), and it is part of the culture that shapes people’s behaviour (Kotler, 2000). Religious beliefs play a significant role in sculpting social behaviour.
Differences in religious affiliations tend to influence the way people live, the choices they make, what they eat and whom they associate with. Religion defines the ideals for life, which in turn are reflected in the values and attitudes of societies and individuals (Fam et al., 2004). Religion is highly personal in nature and therefore its effects on consumer behaviour depend on individuals’ level of religious commitment or the importance placed on religion in their life. Religious commitment or religiosity, as defined by Worthington et al. (2003), is: “the degree to which a person uses adheres to his or her religious values, beliefs and practices and uses them in daily living”. In marketing studies, religious commitment represents an individual’s adherence to his or her religion’s beliefs and practices (Delener, 1990). Religious commitment has been argued to be a greater determinant of religious behaviour, as it shapes motivations and behavioural intentions (Fam et al., 2002). Previous studies on advertising and religion have found that religious commitment affected the response of Muslims to TV advertising (Michell and Al-Mossawi, 1995; Al-Makaty et al., 1996; Michell and Al-Mossawi, 1999). The findings from Michell and Al-Mossawi’s (1999) study of Gulf countries showed religiously strict Muslims scored lower in terms of recall and were unfavourable towards contentious advertisements relative to lenient Muslims. Their findings suggest that there is a difference in perceived controversial elements in advertisements between a devout and lenient Muslim. Such strict clientele may have a negative attitude towards the campaign, and even towards the advertised brand. In his study, Wilkes et al. (1986) argued that religiosity influences several aspects of a consumer’s lifestyle, which eventually may affect choices and/or choice behaviour. They found that when age, income and sex were controlled, people with a higher degree of religious commitment tend to be satisfied with their lives, have a more traditional sex-role orientation and are more likely to be opinion leaders. Fam et al. (2004) studied the attitudes of the followers of four religious groups (Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and non-religious believers) towards four different types of controversial products (gender/sex-related products, social/political groups, health and care products and addictive products). Their findings revealed a significant effect of religiosity on attitudes towards products. According to Fam et al. (2004) advertising of gender/sex-related products, social/political groups and health and care products is the most offensive for Muslims relative to the other three religions. In addition, the religiously devout respondents were more likely to find advertising of gender/sex-related products, health and care products and addictive products more offensive than the less devout followers. In his study on advertising in Saudi Arabia, Luqmani et al. (1989) claimed that provocative and unconventional advertising strategies and advertisements must obtain prior approval from religious authorities. Failure to do so will result in alienation of a wide segment of the conservative Saudi public.

Several studies tried to measure Islamic religiosity. Taai (1985) developed a scale driven from theological Islamic teaching sources that comprise belief and practices like prayer performance and Ramadan fasting to measure Islamic religiosity. Albehairi and Demerdash (1988) developed a scale to measure intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity orientation. Alsanie (1989) developed a scale to measure different aspects of religiosity composed of 60 statements which combines faith (Iman) pillars (believe in God, angels, books, messengers, the hereafter and fate) with deeds (Islam pillars) (Shahadah, prayer, zakat, fasting and pilgrimage). The index treated belief and practice as one dimension, that is, general religiosity. Albelaihi (1997) used three dimensions to measure Islamic
religiosity belief, attitudes and practice. Adila (1999) used the Islamic practices as a measurement of religiousness as that is more apparent and visible than other dimensions of religiosity in Islam, namely, knowledge, belief, consequences and realization of excellence. In measuring religiosity, Mokhlis (2009) used both religious affiliation and religious commitment to examine the influence of religiosity on one aspect of consumer behaviour - shopping orientation and concluded that the differences between consumer behaviours in general were much more overt for religiosity than merely for religious affiliation which imply that religiosity may serve as a potentially powerful predictor and determinant of consumer behaviour. Rehman and Shabbir (2010) defined religiosity based on five dimensions, namely, ideological, ritualistic, intellectual, consequential and experimental. The ideological dimensions refer to the overall beliefs associated with a religion, for instance, beliefs about God, Prophet, fate, etc. Ritualistic dimensions are determined by the actions prescribed by religion such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, etc. Intellectual dimensions refer to an individual's knowledge about religion. Consequential dimensions refer to the importance of religion, while experimental dimensions describe the practicality of the religion. Khraim (2010), in an attempt to introduce an alternative construct for measuring Islamic religiosity in the context of Islamic countries, used dimensions which directed more towards practical behaviour including: Islamic financial services, seeking religious education, current Islamic issues and sensitive products. His result showed that three dimensions (seeking religious education, Islamic current issues and sensitive products) yield the best combination of dimensions to measure Islamic religiosity.

In most of the research on measuring Islamic religiosity, scales of religiosity are mostly based on both beliefs and practices. Measuring belief is very difficult in a Islamic societies, as a Muslim is supposed to have the basic beliefs before he/she can even be considered a Muslim; such a dimension alone will not distinguish between subjects, and thereby will not add any variation (Khraim, 2010). A Muslim who has knowledge of Islam, high sense of its realization, and a strong confession of its truth with tongue and assent of it by heart, is believed to have good practice of the Islamic teachings. It is assumed that a person who performs the religious duties would be more religious than those who do not consistently and cautiously perform them (Shah Alam et al. (2011). This paper uses the scale suggested by Alsanie (1989), as it was developed to measure religiosity in Saudi Arabia a conservative country with a majority Muslim population as is also the case in Sudan. Instruments drawn from Alsanie (1989) to measure religiosity includes praying, fasting and giving Zakat, comply with Islamic guidance in terms of wearing hijab or veil for women, growing beard for men and avoiding listening to music and songs.

These measures were chosen based on the assumption that a committed Muslim is expected to comply with the guidance outlined in Quran and Sunnah. Previous research has shown that highly religious individuals typically exhibit a strong sense of commitment to their belief system and thus they are expected to behave according to the norms as described by their religion (Sood and Nasu, 1995). Islamic guidance stressed that women should dress modestly and encourages women not to show too much of their bodies in public and may show only their hands and face to men outside of their immediate family (The Holy Quran, 24:31-32). Further, most of the famous Islamic scholars agree that to grow a beard is compulsory for all Muslim men, as it is a distinctive sign of Islam, and it is haram (forbidden) for a mature stable Muslim to shave
his beard. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be Upon Him) explicitly commanded the Muslims to grow a beard “Cut short the moustache and lengthen the beard”. (Al-Bukhari and Muslim). In addition, using musical instruments and enjoyment of listening to music and songs are prohibited “haram” or hated (Makroh). The Holy Quran and Hadith have dismissed music. The Quran says:

And of mankind is he who purchases idle talks [i.e. music, singing, etc.] to mislead [men] from the Path of Allah without knowledge, and takes it [the Path of Allah, the Verses of the Qur’an] by way of mockery. For such there will be a humiliating torment (The Holy Quran, 31:6).

The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be Upon Him) said: “Among my ummah there will certainly be people who permit zinaa, silk, alcohol and musical instruments […]” (Sahih Al-Bukhaari). According to Islamic teachings, all that the Muslims do and all their behaviours should be based on Islamic principles (The Holy Quran, 1: 208). Muslims who practice Islam values only do things that are allowed by Allah and reject things that are prohibited by Allah (Rippin, 2001).

This study builds on the existing literature in its attempt to examine the relationship between celebrities’ credibility, attitude towards advertisement and purchase intention, as well as the mediating role of religiosity on the relationship between celebrities’ credibility, attitude towards advertisement and purchase intention.

**Conceptual framework and research model**

The conceptual framework of this consists of a model developed to measure the relationship between endorsement credibility, religiosity attitude and consumer purchase behaviour. The adapted model suggests that there is a strong relationship between the celebrities’ credibility dimensions as the independent variable, on the one hand, and consumer attitude and purchase behaviour, on the other hand, as dependent variables. These relationships were mediated by religiosity. **Figure 1** illustrates these relationships.

**Research hypotheses**

Based on the previous discussion, the following hypotheses and sub-hypotheses are developed:

- **H1.** Celebrities’ credibility is likely to have a positive influence on consumers’ attitude towards celebrity-endorsed TV advertising.
- **H1.1.** Celebrities’ trustworthiness is likely to have a positive influence on consumers’ attitude towards celebrity-endorsed TV advertising.
H1.2. Celebrities’ expertise is likely to have a positive influence on consumers’ attitude towards celebrity-endorsed TV advertising.

H1.3. Celebrities’ attractiveness is likely to have a positive influence on consumers’ attitude towards celebrity-endorsed TV advertising.

H1.4. Celebrities’ respect is likely to have a positive influence on consumers’ attitude towards celebrity-endorsed TV advertising.

H1.5. Celebrities’ likeability is likely to have a positive influence on consumers’ attitude towards celebrity-endorsed TV advertising.

H2. Celebrities’ credibility is likely to have a positive influence on consumers’ purchase behaviour.

H2.1. Celebrities’ expertise is likely to have a positive influence on consumers’ purchase behaviour.

H2.2. Celebrities’ attractiveness is likely to have a positive influence on consumers’ purchase behaviour.

H2.3. Celebrities’ trustworthiness is likely to have a positive influence on consumers’ purchase behaviour.

H2.4. Celebrities’ respect is likely to have a positive influence on consumers’ purchase behaviour.

H2.5. Celebrities’ likeability is likely to have a positive influence on consumers’ purchase behaviour.

H3. Religiosity mediates the relationship between celebrities’ credibility and attitude towards celebrity-endorsed TV advertising.

H4. Religiosity mediates the relationship between celebrities’ credibility and purchase intention.

Research instrument
A survey instrument consisting of 22 measures was used. The questionnaire was divided into several different sections. The major constructs measured in this research are: celebrities’ credibility, consumer attitude towards celebrity-endorsed TV advertising, purchase behaviour and religiosity. Celebrities’ credibility dimensions’ in this study are borrowed from existing literature (Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1990; 1991; Shimp, 2000). Attitude towards celebrity-endorsed TV advertising is measured by five items. The items entertainment and informativeness were adapted from the instruments used by Ducoffe (1996) who identified entertainment, informativeness and irritation as factors contributing to consumers’ evaluations of advertisement value and thus attitude towards advertisements. The item credibility was based on Tsang et al.’s (2004) findings that credibility is an important determinant of attitude. Items including like/dislike and positive/negative are adapted from MacKenzie et al. (1989).

The third construct measures the effect of celebrities’ credibility on the respondents’ purchase behaviour adapted from Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), Kumar (2010). The fourth construct measures the religious commitment. For the measurement of religiosity, which is the mediating variable, the paper used seven statements drawn from Alsanie.
tomeasurer eligiosity from the Islamic perspective which includes: doing prayers (both obligatory and voluntary), fasting, zakat, complying with Islamic dress, listening to music and songs and watching religious TV programmes. Finally, demographic questions pertaining to age, gender, education and marital status are incorporated at the end of the questionnaire. The questionnaire predominantly uses a five-point Likert scale to measure attitude responses and purchase behaviour. Certain items were modified, and changes and improvements to the final survey instrument were made based on the pilot responses to suit Sudanese situation.

The reliability coefficients of the instruments are indicated in Table I. Table I shows the constructs’ reliability and soundness. All alpha values are higher than 60 per cent which give an indication of the high degree of homogeneity and reliability.

Analysis and results

Demographic profile. Of the 450 questionnaires, 370 (82 per cent) usable ones were returned, revised and put to further study. The majority of the respondents (69.6 per cent) were in the age group of 18-25 years, 55 per cent were female, 76.5 per cent were single, and 75 per cent have a university degree. Most of the respondents in the sample (56.7 per cent) were students, 27.6 per cent were employees and 15.7 per cent were involved in private business.

With regard to the respondents experience of celebrity-endorsed TV advertising, the majority of the respondents (95 per cent) have been exposed to a celebrity-endorsed TV commercial in the past six months, but only 49 per cent have bought a celebrity-endorsed product or service during the past six months.

Test of hypotheses

To test the stated hypotheses of this study, multiple regression analysis is performed on the generated data to analyze the relationship between the celebrities’ credibility dimensions and the attitude towards celebrity-endorsed advertisement and purchase behaviour. The results of this analysis provide answers for the hypotheses tested in this study.

The relationship between celebrities’ credibility dimensions and attitude towards advertisement (H1)

H1, states that celebrities’ credibility is likely to have a positive influence on consumers’ attitude towards celebrity-endorsed TV advertising. Table II showed the regression of attitude towards advertisement (Aad) on the celebrities’ credibility (CC) dimensions.

Obviously, from Table II, $R^2$ are to be considered, as these refer to the fitness of the model and its explanatory power. Celebrities’ credibility dimensions cumulatively

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>No. of items</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Celebrities’ credibility</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase behaviour</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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contributed 40.3 per cent of the variance in consumers’ attitude towards celebrities’ advertising. The results of Table II showed that the direct effects of independent variables that include attractiveness ($\beta = 0.156, p = 0.00$), expertise ($\beta = 0.084, p = 0.025$), trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.123, p = 0.001$) and likeability ($\beta = 0.165, p = 0.00$) have a direct significant influence on consumers’ attitude, while celebrities’ respect was not significant in shaping consumers’ attitude ($\beta = 0.054, p = 0.177$). Thus, $H1$ is partially accepted, where $H1.1$, $H1.2$, $H1.3$ and $H1.4$ are accepted, and only $H1.5$ is rejected.

The relationship between celebrities’ credibility and purchase behaviour ($H2$)

$H2$ deals with the relationship between celebrities’ credibility and purchase behaviour. As explained earlier, it is assumed that celebrities’ credibility will have a positive impact on purchase behaviour. Table III summarizes the findings.

From the results in Table III which reflect the effect of celebrities’ credibility dimensions on consumers’ purchase behaviour (PB), it is evident that the five dimensions of celebrities’ credibility explained 43.9 per cent of the variance in consumers’ purchase behaviour. The dimensions of attractiveness, trustworthiness and likeability in celebrities’ credibility were found to be positively and significantly associated with consumers’ purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.212, p = 0.000$; $\beta = 0.149, p = 0.000$; and $\beta = 0.272, p = 0.00$, respectively). On the other hand, celebrities’ expertise ($\beta = 0.050, p = 0.247$) and celebrities’ respect ($\beta = 0.004, p = 0.928$) were both not significant with consumers’ purchase behaviour. These results mean that $H2$ is partially accepted (only $H2.1$, $H2.3$ and $H2.5$ are accepted), whereas $H2.2$ and $H2.4$ are rejected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>0.025*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>0.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likeability</td>
<td>0.165</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2 = 40.3%$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Significant levels: **$p \leq 0.01$, *$p \leq 0.05$
The mediation effect of religiosity on the attitude towards celebrity-endorsed advertisement (H3)

This section shows the results pertaining to the mediation effect of religiosity on the attitude towards celebrity-endorsed TV advertising. To test the mediating effect of religiosity (RLGS) on the relationship between celebrities’ credibility (CC) and attitude towards the advertisement (Aad), hierarchical regression analysis was used. Following Baron and Kenny (1986), where the Aad was first regressed, simple regression analysis was used on the CC ($\beta = 0.627, p = 0.000$), RLGS on CC ($\beta = -0.168, p = 0.001$) and Aad on RLGS ($\beta = -0.137, p = 0.009$). All the relationships were significant. Thus, we can conclude that the religiosity mediates the relationship between celebrities’ credibility (CC) and attitude towards the advertisement (Aad). However, the hierarchical regression analysis shows that the regression coefficient of the relationship between CC and Aad is reduced in the final step as shown in Table IV, but remains significant. Therefore, we can say that religiosity plays only a partial mediating role between CC and Aad. That is, part of the effect of the CC is mediated by the RLGS, but other parts are either direct or mediated by other variables not included in the model. Therefore, H3 is accepted.

The mediation effect of religiosity on the purchase behaviour (H4)

The same steps were followed to test the mediating effect of religiosity on the relationship between celebrities’ credibility and purchase behaviour. The PB was first regressed on CC ($\beta = 0.634, p = 0.000$), using simple regression analysis, RLGS on CC ($\beta = -0.168, p = 0.001$) and PB on RLGS ($\beta = -0.012, p = 0.000$) as shown in Table V. All the relationships were significant, and the regression coefficient of the relationship between CC and PB is slightly reduced in the final step but significant. Therefore, we can conclude that religiosity partially mediates the relationship between CC and PB and H4 is supported.

Discussion and conclusion

The objectives of this study as stated earlier are first, to investigate the effectiveness of using celebrities in TV advertising measured by its impact on consumers’ attitude and purchase behaviour. Second is to examine the mediating role of consumers’ attitude towards celebrities’ advertisement, and their purchase behaviour.

As hypothesized, the study findings reveal that celebrities’ credibility (CC) had a significant positive impact on both attitude towards advertisement (Aad) with $R^2 = 40.3$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis 1</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$R^2$ change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC $\rightarrow$ ATT</td>
<td>0.627</td>
<td>15.43</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.393</td>
<td>238.08*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis 2</td>
<td>CC $\rightarrow$ RLGS</td>
<td>$-0.168$</td>
<td>3.277</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>10.741*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis 3</td>
<td>RLGS $\rightarrow$ ATT</td>
<td>$-0.032$</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>0.439</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>6.996*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC $\rightarrow$ ATT</td>
<td>0.621</td>
<td>15.071</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.394</td>
<td>119.211*</td>
<td>0.375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table IV.** H3: RLGS as a mediator in the relationship between CC and AAD

**Notes:** Significant levels: **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$**
per cent and purchase behaviour (PB) with $R^2 = 43.3$ per cent. This means that a credible celebrity can serve as an important antecedent in positive evaluations of advertisements and induce purchase decision which is in line with similar previous studies (Goldsmith et al., 2000; Ohanian, 1990).

In line with Maddux and Roger (1980), the study found that celebrities’ likeability has the greatest impact on both Aad and PB. Celebrities’ attractiveness comes second followed by trustworthiness and expertise. That means that Sudanese consumers are more influenced by celebrities’ likeability and attractiveness than their trustworthiness and expertise, while they are not affected by celebrities’ respect. This suggests that a celebrity’s credibility construct composed of likeability, attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise dimensions should be used in future studies. These findings seem to be in line with the previous studies carried out in other Arab countries. For example, Sallam (2011) and Sallam and Wahid (2012) revealed that attractiveness has a greater impact on Yemeni and Saudi consumers’ attitudes than expertise which is also found by many Western studies as an important indicator of advertising effectiveness (Chao et al., 2005; Till and Busler, 2000, Joseph, 1982). In contrast with previous studies, trustworthiness and expertise came as the third and the fourth influential celebrity credibility dimension, respectively. That means that trustworthiness and expertise, were less important predictive constructs than likeability and attractiveness, while both dimensions have traditionally been associated with celebrities’ credibility (Hovland et al., 1953; Friedman and Friedman, 1979; Ohanian, 1990; Homer and Kahle, 1990; Mowen and Minor, 2006).

Previous research on celebrity endorsement reveals that celebrity endorsers produced more positive attitudes towards advertising and greater purchase intentions than a non-celebrity endorser (Ohanian 1991). According to Ohanian (1991), the higher the perceived credibility of an endorser, the more effective the advertising tends to be. Consistent with those studies, the findings of this study indicate that celebrity-endorsed TV advertising has a positive significant impact on Sudanese attitude and purchase behaviour. On the other hand, the study confirms the hypnotized mediating role of religiosity on the relationship between celebrities’ credibility and the attitude towards the advertisement and purchase behaviour.

The study reveals that religiosity correlates negatively with celebrities’ credibility and attitude towards advertisement which reflects that the more religious the respondent, the more negative attitude the respondent develops, and the less credible he/she finds the celebrities. It can be argued that religiously committed respondents were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis 1</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$R^2$ change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC $\rightarrow$ PB</td>
<td>0.634</td>
<td>15.706</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.401</td>
<td>246.69*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC $\rightarrow$ RLGS</td>
<td>$-0.168$</td>
<td>3.277</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>10.741*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLGS $\rightarrow$ PB</td>
<td>$-0.012$</td>
<td>0.283</td>
<td>0.778</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>5.191</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC $\rightarrow$ PB</td>
<td>0.632</td>
<td>15.415</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.401</td>
<td>123.07*</td>
<td>0.388</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** Significant levels: **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$**

Table V: The mediation role of religiosity
less receptive of using celebrities in advertising. Advertisements that depict female
celebrities, singers and actors or use music or anything that contradicts Islamic
guidance, may be considered as offensive to devoted Muslims. Compared to the
followers of other religions who evolved with modernity and adopted its lifestyles,
followers of Islam seem to be holding to their traditional beliefs and values (Fam, 1996).
In line with this, Fam et al. (2004) found that the intensity of offence was positively
linked with religiosity, which means that more devout Muslims will be offended more
than lenient Muslims. Similarly, Michell and Al-Mossawi (1999) found that Muslims
scored lower in terms of recall and were unfavourable towards contentious
advertisements relative to lenient Muslims.

Implications and future research
The findings of this study, which, to the best of the authors’ knowledge, is the first study
of its kind in Sudan and other Arab countries, provide empirical evidence to verify the
existence of the mediating role of religiosity on both the attitude and purchase behaviour
in the Sudanese context.

The findings also provide guidance for practitioners, in the sense that religiosity
should be weighed in and given high importance while employing celebrities in their
advertising campaigns and ensuring that their advertisements’ contents are compliant
with the Islamic law (Shariah) which is the code that prescribes and governs the duties,
morals and behaviour of all Muslims, collectively and individually, in all aspects of life
(Luqmani et al., 1989). Advertising that does not take into account the sensitivities of
Islamic values and culture, may result in lost sales and perhaps loss of a company’s
image (Waller and Fam, 2001). In light of these sensitivities, as stated by Wilson and
Hollensen (2010), when serving conservative societies such as Iran, marketing
communications’ initiatives steer well away from using images, music and stories that
are provocative, sexually explicit, erotic or encouraging sexual promiscuity. Further,
Luqmani et al. (1989) claim that provocative and unconventional advertising strategies
and advertisements must obtain prior approval from religious authorities. Failure to do
so will result in alienation of a wide segment of the conservative Saudi public. Moreover,
understanding how religious beliefs influence the attitude towards the advertising is of
great importance to international advertisers to improve advertising effectiveness
without offending their Muslim audience.

For global marketers, it is advisable to devote considerable time and resources on
understanding religious beliefs upon entering a new market, particularly where Islam is
the faith of the majority. Understanding the impact of religion on the value systems of a
society and the effect of value systems on marketing must not be underestimated (Fam
et al., 2002).

The results enrich the literature on the religiosity and its influence on the consumer
behaviour, particularly in the celebrity-endorsed advertisements. At the same time, the
study extends this knowledge to another context that has not been explored previously,
i.e. that of Sudan. It provides an understanding of Sudanese attitudes and purchase
decision, as Muslims, and thus provides practitioners with guidelines on how to design
celebrity-endorsed TV advertisements to influence consumers’ attitude and buying
behaviour. The results of the study are readily extendible to Muslim countries and
communities similar to Sudan.
However, the study has some limitations, as it investigates the effectiveness of celebrities’ endorsement in television commercials only. Future research could be extended to investigate the effectiveness of using celebrities advertising on other different media such as radio, printed and outdoors media. Further, the study uses a scale based on the Islamic practice dimensions and using a more comprehensive scale to measure religiosity based on both beliefs and practices may be a further extension.

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Further reading


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