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Shelton, Jake M. G.

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An empirical study of fictitious human spokes-characters: the use of video game characters as brand endorsers to improve the purchase intentions of consumers.

Jake M. G. Shelton

319153

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Master of Commerce (Marketing)

in the School of Economics and Business Sciences

at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Supervisor: Mr Norman Chiliya

Declaration

I, the undersigned, _____ (*full names, please print*), hereby declare that this research is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Honours in Business Science at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

I further declare that:

I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong. I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others. I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.

SIGNED AT _____ ON THIS _____ DAY OF _____

Abstract

Celebrity endorsements have been established as one of the most preferred methods of advertising by marketers. This popularity springs from the numerous benefits which advertisers experience when employing a celebrity endorser. However there are also a number of potential risks which can cause major problems when using a celebrity as part of a brands marketing campaign. The benefits of using a celebrity endorser can be markedly reversed if the celebrity is involved in a controversial incident.

As a solution to this problem this research has investigated the use of video game characters as celebrity brand endorsers. This is because video game characters are celebrities in their own right but they are not plagued by the same risks and problems as ordinary celebrities. This type of endorsement has been done in the past, an example being the use of Lara Croft to endorse Lucozade, and this kind of endorsement has been shown to boost sales.

This research addresses a gap in knowledge by investigating the plausibility of using a video game character in place of a celebrity to endorse a brand. This research has applied the learnings from several models of celebrity endorsement to the use of video game characters in order to investigate the positive characteristics which consumers perceive about video game characters and how these characteristics affect their interests in purchasing the products.

The Models which were used were: the Source Attractiveness Model, the Source Credibility Model and the Match-Up Hypothesis. The overlapping constructs of these models were used to develop the Theoretical Model of Fictitious Human Spokes Characters.

This research consisted of a self-administered quantitative research questionnaire, which was tested using a pilot study of 45 respondents. The questionnaire was distributed in the city of Johannesburg, South Africa, to a sample group of 493 respondents between the ages of 18 to 35. Fictitious adverts were used as stimuli during the questionnaire. The data collected was analysed using statistical analysis to investigate the relationships between the variables used in the research model. Convenience sampling was used because of time and monetary constraints.

This research found that video game characters that are perceived by the target audience to be attractive, likeable, familiar, trustworthy, an expert in relation to the product being endorsed and matched well with the product being endorsed can be used to increase the purchase intentions of the target audience when the characters are used to endorse a brand.

This research also found that the endorsements are not equally effective for consumers of different genders or for consumers who have previous experience with video games and those that do not.

It can be recommended that marketers invest time into investigating the usefulness of using video game characters as endorsers for their brand. It can also be recommended that video game companies seek opportunities to create partnerships with marketers to use their characters as brand endorsers.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Research Topic

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the topic of this research paper and a brief discussion of the issues which are discussed in greater detail in the subsequent chapters. This chapter provides a problem definition and the aims and objectives of this research paper. It also provides a brief literature overview and brief research methodology.

This research paper investigates the use of fictitious human characters as endorsers of brands and products. This research looks at the use of famous video game characters as spokes-characters for endorsing brands in place of ordinary human celebrity brand endorsers. This research also investigates a theoretical model which can be used to describe which characteristics of fictitious human spokes-characters affect the effectiveness of the brand endorsements.

According to previous research celebrity endorsements have been established as one of the most preferred methods of advertising by marketers (Patel, 2009). According to Ohanian (1991), Pornpitakpan (2003a) and Patel (2009), this popularity of celebrity endorsement is due to advertisers' belief that a message which is delivered by a well-known personality will attract more attention, as well as improve recall for consumers. Patel (2009) included that celebrities add a new dimension to the product, thereby using their fame to generate this recall.

There are other reasons for using a celebrity endorser. One such reason is that the celebrity acts as a quick means for differentiating the brand from its competitors in the minds of consumers. According to Patel (2009), the right celebrity can deliver the brand message without the need for elaborate story telling. Also the celebrity endorser acts almost as a guarantee for the product lending the brand credibility (Patel, 2009). Jaiprakash (2008) adds that when used effectively a celebrity endorsement can play a valuable role in developing brand equity and also may enhance a brand's competitive position.

The development of brand equity is important as every year marketers spend enormous amounts of money on celebrity endorsement contracts based on the belief that these celebrities will be effective spokespeople for their brands (Jaiprakash, 2008). There is a substantial amount of research on this topic, much of this research suggests that including a celebrity in advertising campaigns will materially improve financial returns for the companies that employ them (Amos, et al., 2008). Also advertisements which feature celebrity figures have been shown to produce consistently more favourable results than those that do not (Atkin & Block , 1983; Jaiprakash, 2008).

According to Avery, Farrand, Nichols, and Rowley (2006) a new industry has emerged globally which trumps the video and music industry in terms of size and growth, and that is the gaming industry. Even more important than the size of this new industry is its potential as a new market, which has been up till recently ignored by marketers (Avery, et al., 2006). Recently developments in the gaming industry have created completely new cultural icons as well as social structures (Avery, et al., 2006) these cultural icons being the characters featured in video games. According to Avery, et al. (2006) in the future game characters and

game developers will be seen as the new celebrities and directors within the entertainment industry around the globe.

Avery, et al. (2006); Peter (2011) and Untal (2012) believe that the massive growth of the gaming console has led to a huge audience of gamers globally, further they state that these new gamers represent a substantial new segment of consumers which businesses can target. There are a multitude of opportunities opening up for brands of all types to offer many different products to this new segment. At all levels we will see a growing importance of media which target gamers specifically, such as magazines or websites, many of which will be unfamiliar in content and style to conventional marketers and brand owners (Avery, et al., 2006).

The gaming phenomenon is something which marketers, advertisers and brand owners cannot afford to ignore as gamers have been creating a lucrative new market on a global scale (Avery, et al., 2006; Peter, 2011; Untal, 2012).

This research focused on the use of these video game characters, emerging from this phenomenon as the new celebrities of this gamer culture, as brand endorsers. This research looks at the benefits of using video game characters as brand endorsers as opposed to traditional human celebrity endorsers. The research looks at the risks associated with traditional celebrity endorsers and how fictitious human spokes-characters can be used to circumvent these risks. The objectives of this research are discussed further on in this chapter.

There is currently very little research done in the area of video game characters endorsing brands; however there is evidence of such advertising having taken place in the past. A

successful example occurred between 1999 and 2001 when the brand Lucozade teamed up with the creators of Tomb Raider (Avery, et al., 2006; Peter, 2011).

1.2 Problems Associated With Traditional Endorsers

The problem with traditional celebrity endorsers is twofold. Firstly it has been evidenced in the past that celebrity endorsers are prone to negative publicity because of their involvement in controversial or uncharacteristic actions (Amos, et al., 2008; Patel, 2009; Shimp & Till, 1998). Secondly, celebrity endorsers are only effective for certain target audiences in which they are appealing. There may be present specific audience segments in which the use of a fictitious human celebrity endorser may be more effective than any typical celebrity endorser (Ding, et al., 2011).

Celebrity endorsements have been proven to be an effective advertising tool; however a problem comes in when the celebrity falls into controversy or if they fail within their field or profession (Patel, 2009). Often an endorsed brand's success relies on the performance of the celebrity. The celebrity's performance refers to the level of achievement which a celebrity may obtain at a specific time within their profession (Amos, et al., 2008). The problem however is that there is no guarantee that the celebrity can continuously perform at a high enough level to remain popular over the length of their career (Amos, et al., 2008).

Marketers who use celebrities to endorse their brands do so in the hope that their target audiences will have positive feelings towards the celebrity and that those positive feelings will then be transferred to the brand through the endorsement and thus enhance the brands standing (Shimp & Till, 1998). Although if the celebrity gets caught up in controversy then

the endorsement by that celebrity can have a negative impact on the brand (Patel, 2009) and because of this, at times, celebrity endorsers may become liabilities to the brands being endorsed (Shimp & Till, 1998).

According to Pornpitakpan (2003b) if a celebrity receives bad publicity, after endorsing the brand, then the image of the product as well as that of the sponsoring firm will both be affected. Amos, Holmes, and Strutton (2008) argue though that there needs to be a strong association between the brand and the celebrity present before negative information about the celebrity can have any major effect on the perceptions of the brand. Yet Amos, et al.(2008) do agree that negative information about a celebrity endorser may put the firms and brands image at risk, such as when Michael Jackson's child molestation charges created a surge of negative publicity, which impacted negatively on his effectiveness as an endorser for Pepsi (Amos, et al., 2008).

A further problem with the use of celebrities currently is that the status of celebrity decays with age (Anderson, et al., 2007). This describes the notion that celebrities can become out-of-date as they age, and most celebrities are unable to retain the same level of celebrity status as their careers mature (Anderson, et al., 2007). Also there are few examples of celebrities who die young, and during their height of fame, to become remembered as cultural icons such as: James Dean, Che Guevara, and Marilyn Monroe. Furthermore Anderson, et al. (2007), states that the rate of decay for celebrities has accelerated over the last century.

In summary the problems with celebrity endorsement lies in the fact that marketers cannot control every aspect of the celebrity. Marketers have no control over the celebrities future behaviour, therefore the brand is always at risk of negative publicity caused by the celebrity

(Shimp & Till, 1998). There is always the risk that the celebrity will behave in a way that is uncharacteristic of what fans have come to expect from that person and as such lose credibility or even form negative associations among the target audience (Anderson, et al., 2007). Secondly, the marketers cannot control the performance of the celebrity within the celebrity's field or profession (Amos, et al., 2008). Lastly the level of celebrity status which an endorser enjoys may decay with time (Anderson, et al., 2007).

In response to these aforementioned problems which are a common result of celebrity endorsements, this research looks at the use of fictitious human spokes characters as a possible solution to these problems. In particular this research focuses on a specific set of fictitious human spokes-characters, those being video game characters with a humanlike appearance.

Video game characters are celebrities in their own right but they are not plagued by the same risks and problems as ordinary celebrities (Avery, et al., 2006). First of all video game characters do not suffer the same aging problem as traditional celebrities (Avery, et al., 2006) and video game characters do not have the same problem of celebrity decay as Anderson, et al. (2007) mentioned for traditional celebrities.

Secondly a game character is created by game makers who have complete control over the characters actions. There is no chance of the character failing in their profession (Avery, et al., 2006). There is no way that a video game character can act in any way that is uncharacteristic of what the fans of that character have come to expect because of the process required to animate the character (Avery, et al., 2006).

Finally Avery, et al. (2006), describes a game characters personality as being “bullet proof”, this is because the game character cannot get messily divorced or get caught experimenting with drugs. Game characters cannot behave unpredictably and risk the reputation of the brand by behaving in a controversial way (Avery, et al., 2006). Game characters are fictional, animated personalities and so they are generally immune to negative publicity (Shimp & Till, 1998).

The above evidence supports the argument that the use of fictitious human spokes characters can prevent the problem of controversial and uncharacteristic behaviours which are common among traditional human celebrities.

In respect to the problem that not all celebrities can be used to target all consumer segments, the researcher looked at fictitious human spokes characters being used as brand endorsers, specifically the use of video game characters as spokes-persons.

It could be argued that celebrity endorsements can be used to broaden the brands customer base and make the brand appealing to new consumer segments (Ding, et al., 2011). The value of video game characters could then be argued to be to target new consumer segments rather than current target segments for the brand. According to Avery, et al. (2006) using video game characters as brand endorsers can actually help to reposition the brand into a new customer segment.

In most cases celebrities have fans and these fans may translate into a specific target market nice for the brand which the celebrity endorses (Ogunsiji, 2012). Video game characters also have fans and as such they could have the same use as celebrities in creating a new niche

target market for the brand which competitors may not easily be able to copy. The use of video game characters as brand endorsers gives marketers the opportunity to target a growing market segment of video gamers (Bustami & Fikry, 2012).

In summary the problems which are generally found in using traditional celebrity endorsements may be addressed by using popular game characters as spokes-characters for endorsement purposes. In the case of the Lara Croft endorsement of Lucozade, Avery, et al. (2006) stated that the partnership was mutually beneficial for all the parties involved, and the association with Lara improved Lucozade's sales. This is evidence of the effectiveness of using such a campaign to influence purchase intentions towards an endorsed brand (Avery, et al., 2006).

1.3 Literature Overview

This section gives a brief overview of the literature and secondary research that was used in this paper. The literature which was used for this research paper is discussed in further detail in chapter 2.

1.3.1 Background of Celebrity Endorsements

The use of celebrities in endorsing products is a ubiquitous feature within modern marketing (McCracken, 1989). There are a multitude of authors who agree that around 25% of advertisements feature some form of celebrity as a brand or product endorser, to the extent that it has in recent times become a global phenomenon (Biswas, et al., 2009; Daswani, et al.,

2010; McCracken, 1989). According to Biswas, et al. (2009) this indicates the effectiveness and validity of using this strategy as a means of creating a persuasive communication.

The celebrity endorser may be defined as an individual who is well recognised by the public and who uses this recognition on behalf of a brand or product by appearing alongside it in an advertisement (McCracken, 1989).

Considerable sums of money are spent by marketers in order to align their brands with big-name celebrities in the belief that such brand endorsement will achieve the following three objectives (Biswas, et al., 2009):

- firstly the celebrity will draw the consumers attention towards the endorsed products or brands and break through the clutter of competing advertising;
- secondly the endorsement will transfer values from the celebrities social persona to the products or brands, and in turn from the products or brands to the consumers who purchase the products; and
- lastly in the hopes that the endorsement will influence consumers in a positive way for the brand, by influencing consumers purchase intentions of developing brand equity.

In addition to these objectives Biswas, et al. (2009) indicate five advantages to employing a celebrity endorser, they are:

- drawing attention to the brand,
- crisis management,
- brand repositioning,
- global marketing, and
- boosting sales.

1.3.2 Models of Celebrity Endorsement

Despite the popularity of the advertising technique of using celebrity endorsers, advertisers and marketing researchers disagree on which of the celebrity's characteristics are most important when trying to influence consumers into buying the endorsed products or brands (Biswas, et al., 2009). Below is a table (Table 1.1) which summarizes several models explaining the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements.

Table 1.1 Different Models of Celebrity Endorsements

Models Explaining Celebrity Endorsements	Author(s)	Basic Tenet
Source Attractiveness Model	McGuire (1985)	Physical attractiveness, as well as likability and familiarity of the celebrity.
Meaning Transfer Model	McCracken (1986)	Process of transfer from celebrity to product and to consumer.
Match-up Hypothesis	Kamins and Gupta (1994)	Celebrity image matches product image.
Source Credibility Model	Ohanian (1990)	Celebrity's perceived Expertise, Trustworthiness, and Attractiveness.
Elaboration Likelihood Model	Ahmed, Azmat, Mir and Farooq (2012)	Motivation and ability to serve.

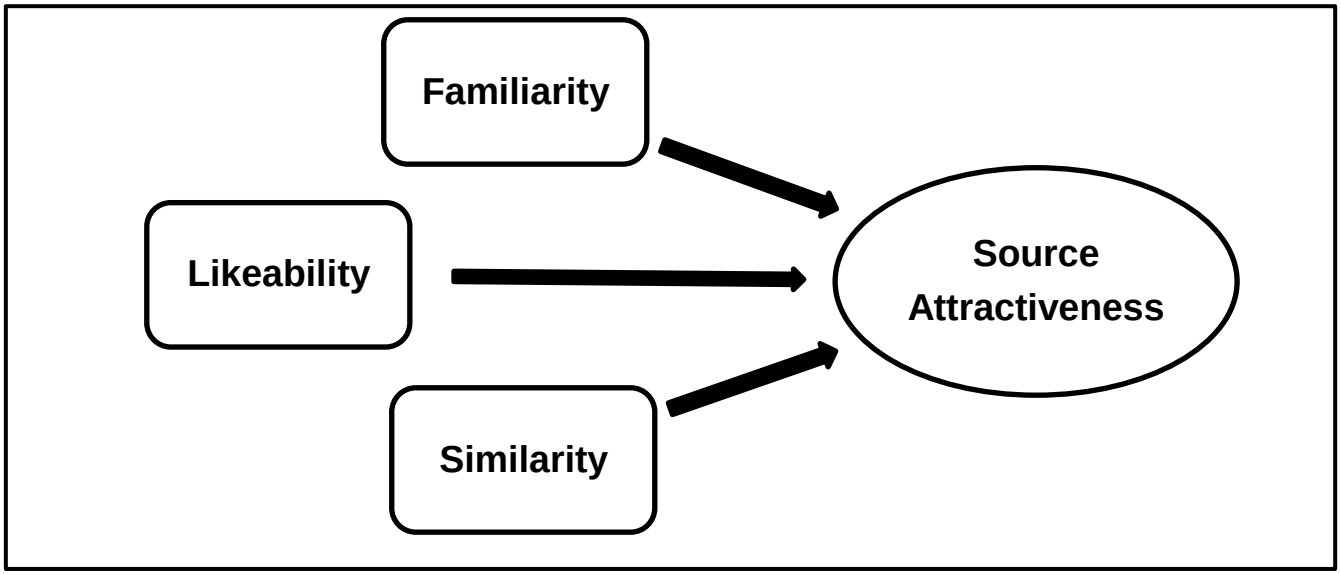
Source: Adapted from Biswas, Hussain, & O'Donnell (2009)

The models listed in table 1.1 are discussed in briefly below.

1.3.3 The Source Attractiveness model

The source attractiveness model states that attractiveness encompasses not only physical attractiveness but also other characteristics which consumers may perceive as being appealing (Amos, et al., 2008). According to Silburyte (2009) a source's attractiveness is not limited only to the spokesperson's good looks but may encompass non-physical characteristics such as intelligence, charm or talent. The source attractiveness model is composed of three constructs, they are: likeability, familiarity, and similarity to the target audience (Amos, et al., 2008). Consumers tend to form positive stereotypes about attractive people, and research has shown in addition that more attractive communicators are more successful at changing beliefs (Erdogan, 1999). Also Erdogan (1999) contends that similarity, familiarity and liking of an endorser will all affect the effectiveness of the message.

Figure 1.1: The Source Attractiveness Model

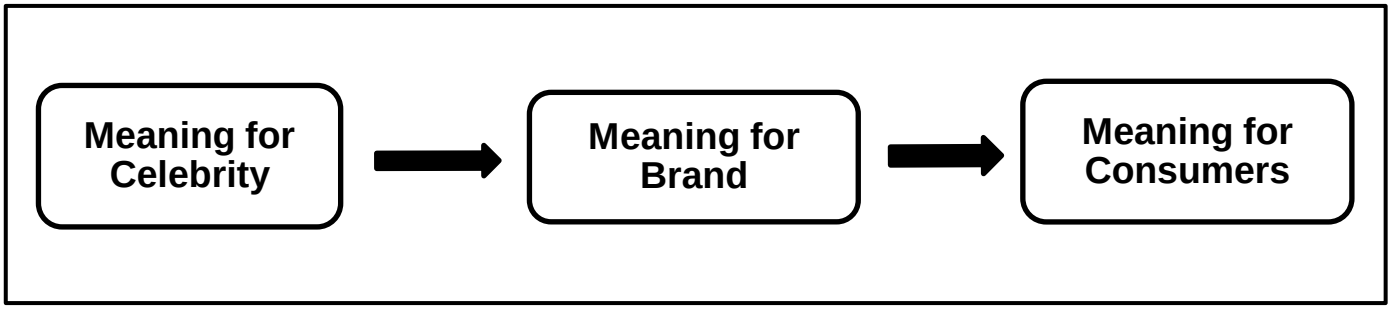


Adapted from Amos, *et al* (2008)

1.3.4 The Meaning Transfer Model

Celebrities are most often employed by marketers to lend their personality to the endorsed brand or product (Biswas, et al., 2009) and according to Jaiprakash (2008) when a celebrity is paired up with a product the values that consumers associate with the celebrity become associated with the brand or product in the minds of consumers. This is described in the literature as the Meaning Transfer Model (Amos, et al., 2008). This model is based on the transfer of meaning from the celebrity to the brand which is being endorsed. The model states that celebrities develop a persona through the various roles which they play in society (Amos, et al., 2008). Furthermore the model describes that when a celebrity endorses a brand the values and meanings associated with that celebrities public persona move to the product (Jaiprakash, 2008). Amos, et al. (2008) argue that when a customer purchases the endorsed product the customer does so in the hope that the customer might claim some of these transferred meanings for the customers own life. Biswas, et al. (2009) state that the higher the perceived match is between the symbolic properties of the product and the meanings consumers draw from the celebrity, then the higher the likelihood is of consumers purchasing the product.

Figure 1.2: The Meaning Transfer Model

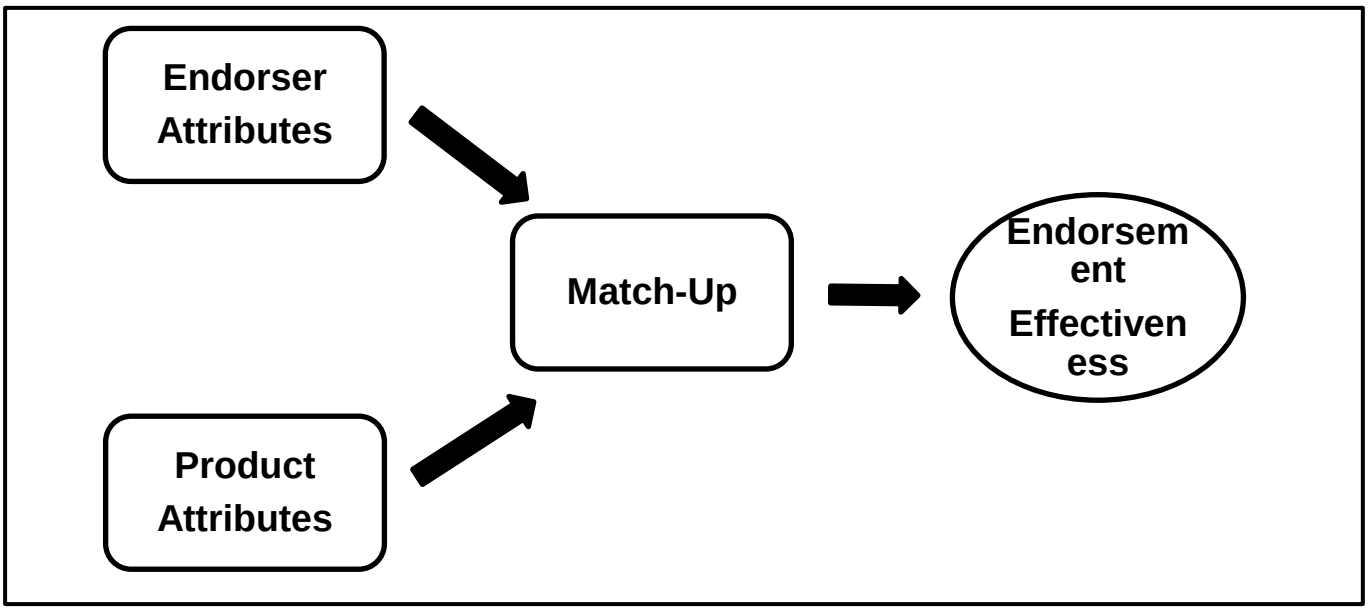


Adapted from Amos, *et al* (2008)

1.3.5 The Match-up Hypothesis

Also referred to as the Celebrity-product fit, this model refers to the suitability of the match between the brand being endorsed and the celebrity endorser (Amos, et al., 2008). The celebrity-product fit is believed to be a key determinant to the effectiveness of the endorsement, and the better the fit between the celebrity and the brand being endorsed then the higher the level of effectiveness for the endorsement (Amos, et al., 2008). Patel (2009) argues that the match up hypothesis is about the compatibility between the personality attributes of the celebrity and those of the brand; furthermore he states that as a prerequisite for any effective endorsement there needs to be an overlap between these two different personalities. In conclusion to this it is seen that the effectiveness of using a celebrity will vary across different classes of products (Amos, et al., 2008).

Figure 1.3: The Match-Up Hypothesis Model



Adapted from Amos, *et al* (2008)

1.3.6 The Source Credibility Model

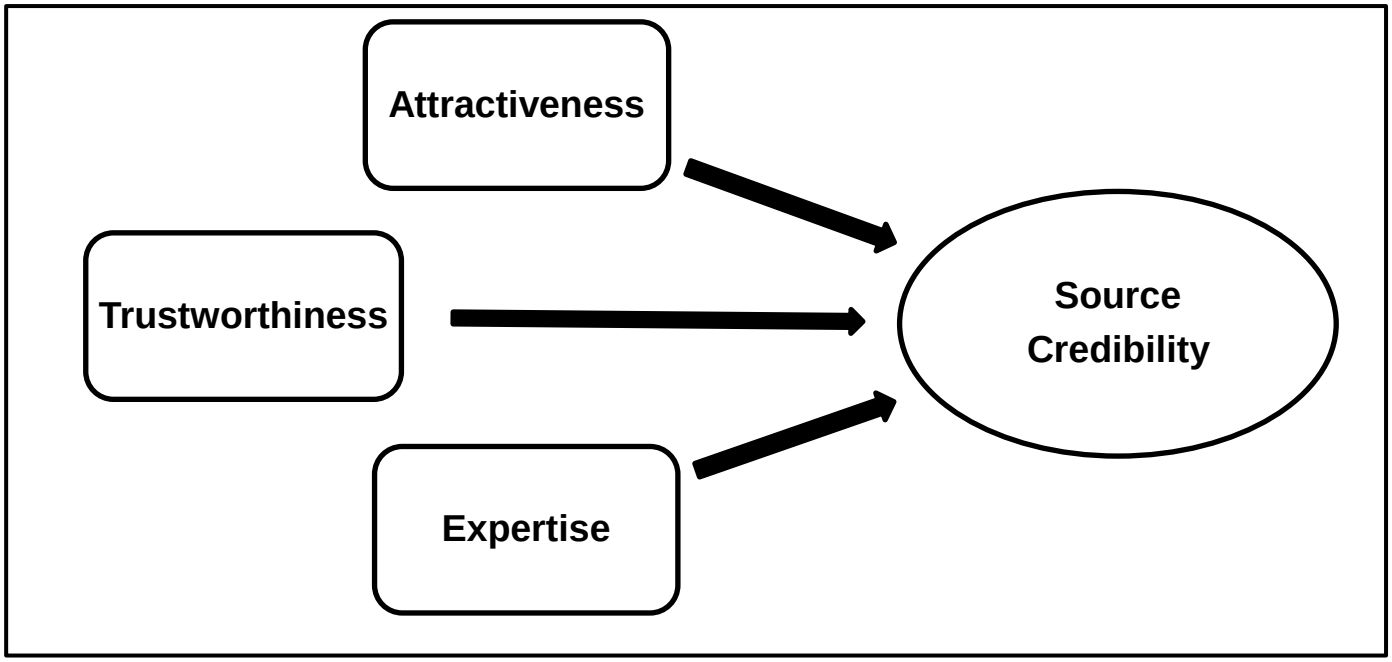
This model argues that the effectiveness of the message being delivered by an endorser relies on the perceived levels of expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness of that endorser (Erdogan, 1999). It is argued by Ohanian (1991) that an endorser's influence over the target audience depends upon some combination of the above three constructs, and the resultant value of this combination can be defined as the sources perceived credibility.

According to Patel (2009) a celebrity endorser's credibility is the most important factor in determining the success of any celebrity endorsement campaign. Patel (2009) also states that the credibility of celebrities is questionable and unless the celebrity and the product category are closely linked the message which the celebrity is delivering is questionable. This relates back to the Match-up Hypothesis as discussed earlier in this chapter. This opinion presented by Patel (2009) gives motivation to the researcher to include elements of The Match-up Hypothesis with The Source Credibility Model for use in this research paper.

However, some authors disagree with this model of source credibility. Patel (2009) and Ahmed, et al. (2012) omits the attractiveness construct as part of source credibility. According to these authors The Source Credibility Model consists only of the perceived trustworthiness and expertise of the brand endorser. Jaiprakash (2008) defines celebrity credibility as the extent to which a celebrity is perceived to possess expertise relevant to the product and the extent to which they can be trusted to give an objective opinion on the subject.

Ohanian (1990) and Pornpitakpan (2003a) nevertheless included aspects from the source attractiveness model into the source credibility model to make it more accurate.

Figure 1.4: The Source Credibility Model



Adapted from Ohanian (1991)

1.3.7 The Elaboration Likelihood Model

According to Ahmed, et al (2012), The Elaboration Likelihood Model has two key ingredients, these are motivation and ability. Motivation relates to the audiences motivation to perceive the message and comprises of audience involvement and the relevancy of the message to the audience (Ahmed, et al., 2012). Ability refers to the intelligence of the message audience as well as their analytical capability to perceive and process the persuasive message (Ahmed, et al., 2012).

The Elaboration Likelihood Model suggests two paths which lead to a change in attitude: the central route and the peripheral route (Ahmed, et al., 2012). According to Ahmed, et al. (2012) the central route involves the customer actively paying attention to the advertisement and the customer level of involvement is high. The persuasive message of the advertisement may lead to either favourable or unfavourable responses from consumers which may result in lasting positive or negative attitudes towards the brand or firm (Ahmed, et al., 2012).

According to the peripheral route, the receiver isn't actively involved in engaging with the message and thus lacks motivation (Ahmed, et al., 2012). The audience perceives and evaluates the advertisement only on secondary cues. The attitudes which individuals form about the message, whether favourable or unfavourable, are only temporary (Ahmed, et al., 2012).

1.4 Video Game character Brand Endorsers

As mentioned earlier by Avery, et al. (2006) and Peter (2011), there have been examples in the past of game characters teaming up with brands, as a form of celebrity endorsement. The most famous example of this kind of brand endorsement is the teaming up of Lucozade with the star of Tomb Raider, Lara Croft.

The idea was that Lucozade wanted to make their brand more attractive and relevant to the 18 to 24 year-old market segment, and Lucozade used the visionary idea of building a campaign around the game character, Lara Croft (Avery, et al., 2006). Lucozade used Lara as a celebrity to endorse their own brand and although gaming was an important activity within their target market, they did not aim the campaign exclusively at gamers (Avery, et al., 2006).

According to Avery, et al. (2006) this endorsement was successful due to the core values which were shared between the brand and the character. This partnership proved to be mutually beneficial for both organizations involved (Avery, et al., 2006).

Although gamers may be an important target segment in the future, this certainly does not mean that this kind of game character endorsement is aimed exclusively at gamers (Avery, et al., 2006; Peter, 2011). The use of video game characters as brand endorsers gives marketers the opportunity to target a growing market segment of video gamers (Bustami & Fikry, 2012).

Ding, et al. (2011) argue that celebrity endorsements can be used to broaden the brands customer base and make the brand appealing to new consumer segments. The value of video game characters could then be argued to be to target new consumer segments rather than current target segments for the brand. According to Avery, et al. (2006) using video game characters as brand endorsers can actually help to reposition the brand into a new customer segment.

In most cases celebrities have fans and these fans may translate into a specific target market nice for the brand which the celebrity endorses (Ogunsiji, 2012). Video game characters also have fans and as such they could have the same use as celebrities in creating a new nice target market for the brand which competitors may not easily be able to copy.

Ogunsiji (2012) states that to be successful, brands need to convince consumers that they carry a different image and value from their competitors and other competing products, using

video game characters to endorse the brand is a possible way to form such a different image in the minds of consumers.

1.5 Problem Definition

There is a gap in the literature when looking at the topic of using video game characters in advertisements as brand endorsers. This research looks to address this gap in research.

Although there are many examples of fictitious characters achieving international acclaim there is little research into video game characters (Avery, et al., 2006). Video game characters have been used to endorse brands in the past. However there has been little research into a theoretically based model to explain their effect on consumers' perceptions or on their buying behaviours.

1.6 Research Objectives

This section explains the primary and secondary objectives for this research study. There after the theoretical model which was tested in this study is presented. The next section lists the hypotheses which were tested during this research.

1.6.1 Primary Objective

The primary research objective of this study was to investigate the use of video game characters as brand endorsers to influence the purchase intentions of consumers.

1.6.2 Secondary Objectives

The following secondary objectives were identified in order to achieve the primary research objective:

a) To conduct a literature review to identify and define concepts associated with brand endorsement and to identify all of the variables which can be used to explain the effectiveness of fictitious human spokes-characters.
b) To create a questionnaire based on the proposed theoretical model and its underlying variables.
c) To conduct an empirical survey to ascertain the plausibility of using a video game character as a fictitious human spokes-characters to endorse a brand or product.
d) To summarize, draw conclusions and provide recommendations based on the findings of the survey.

1.7 Theoretical Model and Hypotheses

The model which was used for this research consists of a combination of the components of three models which were used in previous studies. These three models are “The Source Attractiveness model”, “The Match-up Hypothesis” and “The Source Credibility model”. In the review of the secondary research for this study it was discovered that there appears to be an overlap between the components of these three models.

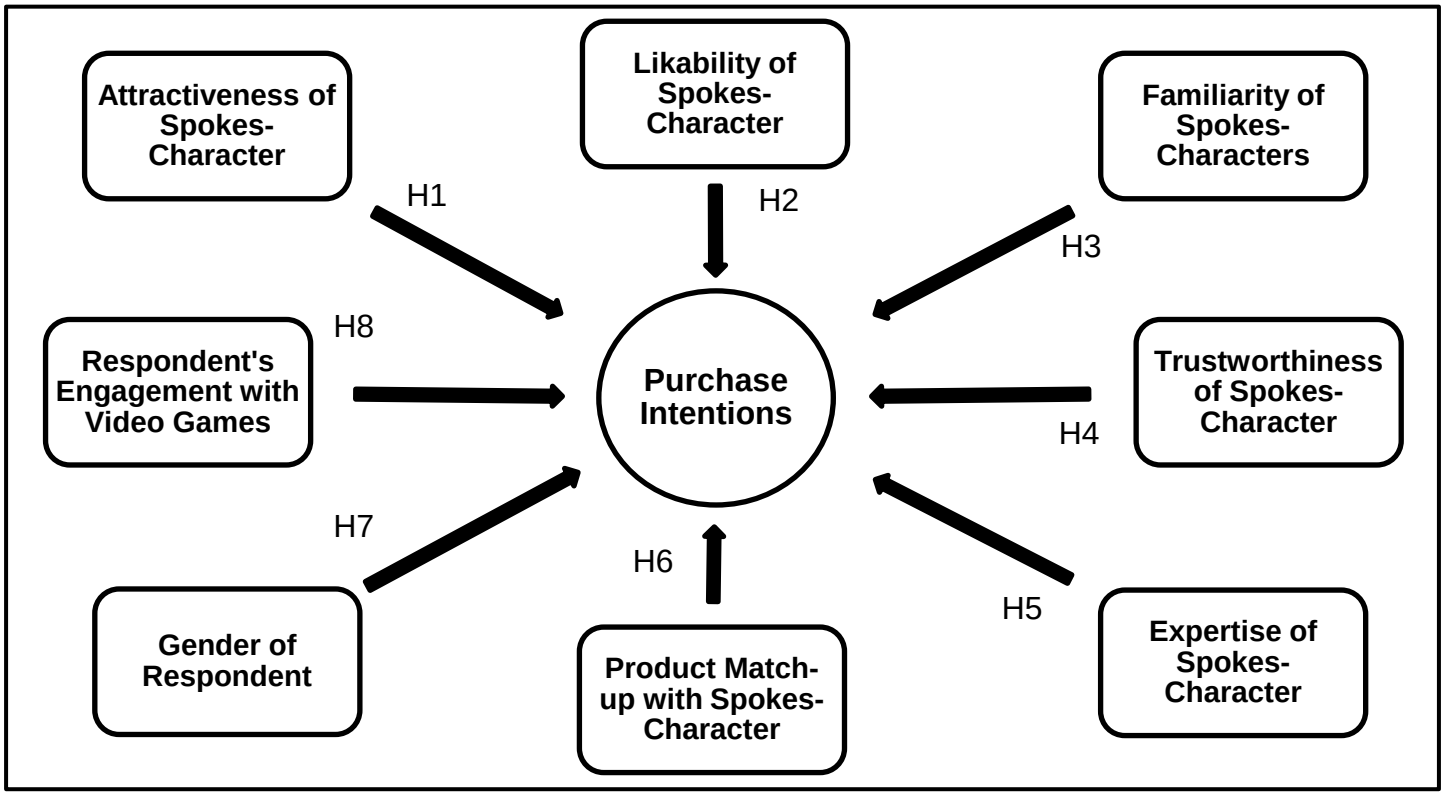
Unfortunately because of the methodology and time frame in which this research was undertaken, the 2 other popular models of brand endorsements could not be tested accurately. Firstly, “The Meaning Transfer Model” could not be tested because the timeframe of the

research study was too short and there was no time to investigate the progress of the "meaning" associated with the brand endorser through the three stages of the model.

Secondly, "The Elaboration Likelihood Model" requires there to be an investigation of whether the message was received through the central route or the peripheral route. However because the research was undertaken through the use of a survey, and participants were asked to engage directly with the advertisements, it was not possible to measure how the message would have been perceived through the peripheral route, and thus it could not be tested with accuracy. As a result of the above limitations these models could not be tested with accuracy they were excluded from the overall model which was tested during this research study.

Below, in the figure, is a graphical representation of the model which was tested during this study. The model has been coined "The Theoretical Model of Fictitious human Spokes Characters" and its components are discussed later on in this chapter.

Figure 1.5: The Theoretical Model of Fictitious Human Spokes Characters



Source: Adapted from McGuire (1985), Ohanian (1990) and Kamins and Gupta (1994)

This model combines the constructs found in the Source Attractiveness Model, which was developed by McGuire in 1985, the Match-up Hypothesis, developed by Kamis and Gupta in 1994, and the Source Credibility Model, developed by Ohanian in 1990.

The Theoretical Model of Fictitious Human Spokes Characters can be summarised as three major components, each of which consists of a combination of measurable constructs. These three major components are: the credibility of the spokes-character, the attractiveness of the spokes-character and the match-up between the spokes-character and the brand or product being endorsed.

The credibility of the spokes-character can be broken down into two constructs, those are:

- The perceived expertise of the spokes-character.
- The perceived trustworthiness of the spokes-character.

The attractiveness of the spokes-character can be broken down into three constructs, these are:

- The perceived attractiveness of the spokes-character.
- The perceived likeability of the spokes-character.
- The perceived familiarity of the spokes-character.

The match-up between the brand being endorsed and the product endorser is believed to be a key determinant to the effectiveness of the endorsement, and the better the fit between the spokes-character and the brand being endorsed then the higher the level of effectiveness for the endorsement (Amos, et al., 2008). Patel (2009) argues that the product match-up with the spokes-character is about the compatibility between the personality attributes of the spokes-character and those of the brand; furthermore he states that as a prerequisite for any effective endorsement there needs to be an overlap between these two different personalities.

This model also includes two other constructs which are unrelated to the previous models of brand endorsements. The first construct is the "gender of respondents" this construct is designed to test the effect which the gender of the respondent has on the purchase intentions towards the endorsed brand. The research done by Avery, et al. (2006) stated that there would be little difference between the purchase intentions of males and females for the brands endorsed by video game characters because video games are popular among both male and female consumers.

The second construct which was added to this model was the construct of "engagement with video games". This added construct was simply to test whether there was difference in the purchase intentions of respondents who play video games versus those respondents who do not play video games. It was difficult to predict before the research was undertaken whether the amount of engagement the respondents had with video games, before the research was undertaken, would have an effect on their attitudes towards the endorsements by the video game characters or how it would affect the purchase intentions of the respondents when they had viewed the advertisements.

1.7.1 Research Hypotheses

In order to reach the above mentioned primary objective the following hypotheses were developed and tested during this research paper:

H_1: The video game character's perceived attractiveness is positively related to purchase intention.

H_2: The video game character's perceived likeability is positively related to purchase intention.

H_3: The video game character's perceived familiarity is positively related to purchase intention.

H_4: The video game character's perceived trustworthiness is positively related to purchase intention.

H_5: The video game character's perceived expertise is positively related to purchase intention.

H_6: The perceived mutch-up between the video game character and the brand is positively related to purchase intention.

H_7: There is a difference between the responses of males and females in relation to their purchase intentions.

H_8: There is a difference between the responses of those respondents who play video games and those respondents who do not play video games in relation to their purchase intentions.

1.8 Research Design and Methodology

1.8.1 Research design

Research design may be defined as a framework for conducting the marketing research plan, which specifies the procedures necessary to obtain the information needed to solve the marketing problem (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). A research design serves as a guideline for conducting the study. Malhotra and Peterson (2006) suggest that a researcher needs to choose a design which will firstly ensure that the research is conducted in an efficient manner, and secondly will provide the appropriate information regarding the research.

Qualitative research is an exploratory research methodology which is based on small samples and is conducted in an unstructured way (Boshoff, et al., 2008). The aim of qualitative research is to gain an insight and understanding into a specific problem (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Quantitative research is a research methodology which seeks to quantify the data numerically and usually applies some form of statistical analysis to draw conclusions from the research (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). The aim of quantitative research is to develop rules based on the findings of the research which can be generalized and applied to other

situations (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). After taking both research methods into consideration, it was decided that it was most appropriate to use the quantitative research method to conduct the research.

1.8.2 Data Collection Design

According to Malhotra and Peterson (2006) marketing research is the systematic and objective identification, collection, analysis, dissemination, and use of data that is undertaken to improve the decision making related to a specific marketing problem. The researcher needs to take into account the type, source, nature and form of the information that is to be collected (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). The source of data may be of a primary or secondary source (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

1.8.3 Primary Data Sources

Primary data is that data which is collected by the researcher specifically for addressing the research problem at hand (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). The collection of primary data was done by distributing the questionnaire through convenience sampling to a significant sized sample of individuals within the city of Johannesburg, South Africa. Thereafter the questionnaires were collected, and then coded, and the results were analysed using SAS enterprise guide 4.2.

Convenience sampling was chosen due to the time and monetary constraints (Boshoff, et al., 2008). Using Random sampling was unrealistic due to these resource constraints.

1.8.4 Secondary Data Sources

Secondary data are data which has been previously collected for some purpose other than the research problem at hand (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Secondary data can be collected more quickly and at a lower cost than the collection of primary data. Throughout the duration of this research study, the researcher collected data from numerous secondary research sources. The majority of the secondary research was collected from academic journals, but several academic textbooks were also used by the researcher. The majority of secondary research is discussed in the literature review under chapter 2.

1.9 Sampling

Probability sampling is a sampling procedure in which each individual within a specified population has the same chance of being selected to be part of the sample group chosen for the research (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Nonprobability sampling is a sampling technique that relies on the judgement of the researcher instead of using chance selection procedures to select individuals for the sample group (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Nonprobability sampling was the technique best suited for the research design proposed due to resource restraints.

Under this technique the sampling that was used was convenience sampling. Convenience sampling may be defined as a sample that is obtained based on the convenience and ease of access to the respondents within a certain population (Babi, et al., 2010). One major

drawback to this sampling method is that there is no objective way to evaluate the precision of the results from the sample drawn (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

A sample was drawn from the population of Johannesburg, South Africa, consisting of adults between the ages of 18 and 35, both male and female.

1.10 Questionnaire Design

A questionnaire was designed based on the scales which were used and tested in previous research papers by Amos, et al. (2008), Erdogan (1999) and Ohanian (1990).

A test pilot was run on this questionnaire, where 45 respondents were asked to evaluate the questionnaire and to highlight any problems that the respondents feel may exist. This was to ensure that the respondents have the ability to understand as well as to appropriately answer the questions in the research questionnaire. There were no changes made to the questionnaire after the pilot study was conducted.

Questionnaires may be designed using unstructured or structured questions (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Unstructured questions are open-ended questions which the sample respondents are expected to answer in their own words (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Structured questions are closed-ended questions which provide the sample respondents with a set of response alternatives to choose from, they may be based on multiple-choice or scales (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). The researcher decided to use structured questionnaires based on numerical scales.

The advantages of structured scale questions are that interviewer bias is reduced, and the responses to the questions are easy to code and analyse.

1.11 Data Collection and Analysis

The survey questionnaire was distributed through convenience sampling to individuals within the city of Johannesburg both online through the use of the software Survey Monkey and in person through the use of printed questionnaires. The data collected from these two sources was compiled into a single database which was used for testing.

For the process of analysing and interpreting the data collected, the data was statistically analysed using the SAS statistical program. The data was analysed using both basic statistics, such as descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics. Linear Regression tests were done on the data to test for a relationship between the variables in the research.

1.12 Ethical Considerations

In an attempt to provide valid and concise data, free of bias or deception certain ethical considerations were taken into account in order to ensure that the data is legitimate, unbiased and free of any errors.

All participants were asked to provide informed consent before participating in the research. All surveys were administered to participants voluntarily and they were free to participate in the survey or exit the survey at any time at their own discretion. In addition all information collected from the survey was held as confidential and will not be shared with any individual

other than as part of the congregated results of the survey. To ensure confidentiality all the surveys were anonymous and no contact information was required in the survey.

1.13 Scope of the Study

This research was conducted through the use of a survey of individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 in the area of Johannesburg, South Africa. This research was conducted via a research questionnaire handed out physically and also distributed electronically to participants. Convenience sampling was used due to time and monetary constraints.

This research investigated the use of video game characters as fictitious human celebrity brand endorsers. The research tested which characteristics of these video game characters affected the purchase intentions of the respondents. To reach this objective a hypothetical model of fictitious human brand endorsers was created and tested through the use of the research questionnaire.

1.14 Definition and Discussion of Concepts

This research study deals with several important concepts. Some of these concepts may appear to be abstract and their meanings may be more complicated than the meaning of the term or terms used to describe them. In order for this research to be more clearly understood, several important concepts have been defined below.

1.14.1 Celebrity

A celebrity maybe defined as a person who is well recognized by society and who has a good reputation both in peoples' minds and within that society (Patel, 2009). Anderson, et al. (2007) describes a celebrity as someone who is known for their well-knownness. Alternatively a common definition of a celebrity which is used for brand endorsements is: a celebrity is a person who is widely recognized by the public for his or her accomplishments in areas which are unrelated to the product or brand being endorsed (Alijosiene, et al., 2007; Atkin & Block , 1983; Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Ahmed, et al. (2012) defines a celebrity as a personality which is well known in public either because of their credibility or because of their attractiveness or because of both of these.

A more modern definition of celebrity endorsements is that celebrity endorsement is a form of channel in brand communications through which the celebrity acts as the brands spokesperson and certifies the brand's claim and position by extending his or her personality, popularity and status in the society or expertise in the field to the brand (Ogunsiji, 2012).

All of the above definitions contain a common aspect; that is that celebrities are individuals that are widely recognised by individuals within the population. This recognition originates from sources or activities that are not related to the advert in which the individual appears.

Under these definitions it is possible to view well-known video game characters as celebrities. Therefore the proposed model for the credibility of a celebrity endorser is also applicable to use for the credibility of game characters.

1.14.2 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is generally the most important factor underlying a source's credibility (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Pornpitakpan (2003b) describes trustworthiness as the audience's level of confidence in, as well as acceptance of, the speaker and the message. Ohanian (1991) refers to trustworthiness as the customer's confidence in the communicator for providing a message honestly and in an objective manner. According to Ohanian (1990) the trustworthiness of a celebrity is highly correlated with the consumer's perceived similarity to the celebrity as well as to the perceived expertise and attractiveness of the celebrity.

1.14.3 Expertise

With regard to the expertise of a message source, both Ohanian (1991) and Pornpitakpan (2003a) define expertise as the extent to which a message source is perceived to be a source of valid assertions. Expertise refers to the experience, skills or knowledge possessed by the endorser (Erdogan, 1999). Ohanian (1990) states that a source's perceived level of expertise has a positive impact on attitude change for consumers. According to Erdogan (1999), a more expert source will generate greater intentions to buy the endorsed brand.

1.14.4 Attractiveness

The attractiveness of a message sours refers to both the physical characteristics of the individual and also the non-physical characteristics. According to Sliburyte (2009) the

attractiveness of a source is not only limited to physical appearance but also encompasses non-physical characteristics such as sporting ability, charisma, grace, and intelligence.

Ohanian (1991) and Pornpitakpan (2003b) both agree that advertisers generally prefer to use more physically attractive endorsers as physically attractive communicators are more effective at changing consumers beliefs and also because higher attractiveness results in greater social influence. Jaiprakash (2008) also states that a physically attractive celebrity creates more favourable attitudes towards the advertisement and also leads to stronger purchase intentions. Attractiveness can also be attributed to the nonphysical aspects of a celebrity, such as the celebrity's lifestyle, their personality and their ability (Jaiprakash, 2008).

1.14.5 Likeability

Likeability can be defined as the affection for the spokesperson as a result of the spokesperson's physical appearance, reputation and behaviour (Amos, et al., 2008). Although the informational content of an advertisement may be the most important determinant to affect purchase intentions under certain circumstances, in other circumstances, such non-content attributes as the likeability of the spokesperson is the most influential element of the advertisement (Cacioppo, et al., 1983). Likeability may be the underlying element which persuades consumers towards taking action (Friedman & Friedman, 1979).

1.14.6 Familiarity

Familiarity may be seen to encompass the knowledge about the spokesperson gained through repeated exposures and the similarity the target audience feels with the message source (Arif & Tanvir, 2012). Similarity can form from a sense of common goals, lifestyles or needs shared by the spokesperson and the audience (Arif & Tanvir, 2012; Ohanian, 1990).

The positive attitudes consumers bare towards celebrity endorsers may result from the perceived familiarity and similarity between the audience and the celebrity (Austad & Silvera, 2004).

1.14.7 Product Match-Up

Patel (2009) states that the product match-up with the spokes-character is about the compatibility between the personality attributes of the spokes-character and those of the brand; furthermore he states that as a prerequisite for any effective endorsement there needs to be an overlap between the personalities of the endorser and the product.

The Match-up Hypothesis may be defined as the consistency between the characteristics of a specific celebrity endorser and the attributes of the product which that celebrity is endorsing (Lukas & Seno, 2005). According to Erdogan (1999) the determining factor of the match-up between a brand and its celebrity endorser is the degree of perceived fit between the image of the celebrity and the image of the brand.

The match-up between the brand being endorsed and the product endorser is believed to be a key determinant to the effectiveness of the endorsement, and the better the fit between the spokes-character and the brand being endorsed then the higher the level of effectiveness for the endorsement (Amos, et al., 2008).

1.14.8 Fictitious Spokes-Character

The fictitious spokes-character can be described using the AMOP framework (Appearance, Medium, Origin and Promotion) (Bhatt, et al., 2012). Appearance defines whether the character can be described as either a fictitious human (e.g. actors or illustrations of humans) or non-humans (e.g. animals or personifications of products). Medium is whether the character appears in print, film or any other medium. Origin refers to whether the character originated specifically for the advertisement (Non-celebrity) or if the character originated before the advert for a different purpose (celebrity). Lastly Promotion refers to whether the characters are active (speaking for or demonstrating the product) or if they are passive (symbolic representation) (Bhatt, et al., 2012).

1.14.9 Fictitious Human Characters

According to Bhatt, et al. (2012), as stated above, fictitious characters may be classified as either “human” or “non-human” depending on the defining characteristics of the character. A spokes-character may be defined as a fictitious human character if that spokes-character has an appearance that is humanoid in nature. Spokes-characters which have the appearance of animals or personifications are referred to as fictitious non-human characters (Bhatt, et al., 2012).

The reason why fictitious human characters were chosen to be used in this research rather than non-human characters is because human like characters are more likeable and trustworthy than non-human spokes characters (Bhatt, et al., 2012).

1.14.10 Video Game Character

Video game characters may be defined as the made-up characters or personalities which appear in video games. Video game characters act out the story line within their respective video games. Video game characters may be seen as the actors in the video game industry and as such they have fans just like traditional celebrities (Ogunsiji, 2012).

1.15 Marketing Implications

This research suggests that there is an opportunity for marketers to avoid the problems typically associated to the use of traditional celebrity endorsers, by using a well-known video game character in place of traditional celebrities (Avery, et al., 2006).

The use of video game characters can also help marketers to target a different segment of consumers (Bustami & Fikry, 2012). The use of video game characters as brand endorsers gives marketers the opportunity to target a growing market segment of video gamers (Bustami & Fikry, 2012).

It could be argued that celebrity endorsements can be used to broaden the brands customer base and make the brand appealing to new consumer segments (Ding, et al., 2011). The value of video game characters could then be argued to be to target new consumer segments rather

than current target segments for the brand. According to Avery, et al. (2006) using video game characters as brand endorsers can actually help to reposition the brand into a new customer segment.

Ogunsiji (2012) states that to be successful, brands need to convince consumers that they carry a different image and value from their competitors and other competing products, using video game characters to endorse the brand is a possible way to form such a different image in the minds of consumers.

This research is also useful to marketers as most consumers establish their preferences for brands, between the ages of 15 and 25 (Huang & Radder, 2008). According to Huang and Radder (2008) marketers should make use of potential opportunities to create brand awareness with this group and to establish future brand preferences and possibly future brand loyalty. Gamers in this age group represent a significant group of consumers for marketers to target (Avery, et al., 2006). Young consumers can play an important role in the marketplace as young consumers may exert significant influence on spending within the house hold on a number of different products (Huang & Radder, 2008).

1.16 Structure of the Research Study

Chapter 1: Presents an introduction to the study, identifies the problem statement, and describes the primary and secondary objectives important for the study.

Chapter 2: Provides a literature review of celebrity endorsements.

Chapter 3: Discusses the components that are included in the model to test celebrity effectiveness, which are applied to video game characters.

Chapter 4: Consists of a detailed description and discussion of the research design and methodology.

Chapter 5: Presents the findings of the study and includes an analysis and interpretation of the results.

Chapter 6: Provides a summary and conclusion of the investigation into the effectiveness of brand endorsements by Video game Characters. It also provides recommendations for future research as well as the implications for marketing managers.

1.17 Conclusion

This chapter provides an introduction to the research study and a brief discussion of the topics which are discussed in greater detail in the subsequent chapters. This chapter provides the problem definition and the aims and objectives of this research paper. The chapter also provides a brief literature overview and brief research methodology. It provides several important definitions and lastly the chapter gives an outline of each of the chapters found in this research paper.

Chapter 2

Literature Review of Brand Endorsements and Video Game Characters

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 has given an introduction and a brief summary of the issues which were found throughout this research paper. The chapter gave a brief introduction to the research problem as well as the aims and objectives of this research paper. Chapter 1 also gave an outline of the other chapters which are included in this research study.

This chapter encapsulates a comprehensive list of all the relevant empirical studies which dealt with celebrity endorsements either directly or indirectly. It discusses the use of fictitious characters as brand endorsers. It entails a review of the video game industry as well a review of all the relevant empirical studies surrounding brand endorsements by video game characters.

Sliburyte (2009) argued that the challenge for any advertiser is to explore every possible way of making an advertisement more noticeable, attractive, and compelling for the consumers who are exposed to it. All advertisements aim to create awareness and rouse interest in the minds of the consumers who are exposed to the advertisement (Ahmed, et al., 2012).

According to Brajesh and Gouranga (2011) effective advertising is that advertising which is both personally meaningful and culturally relevant to the target audience and which creates

subjective feelings of positivity for them towards the brand. The basic job of any advertisement is to influence the consumers by generating interest amongst the target audience but for an advertisement to be truly effective it needs to create meaning for the audience (Brajesh & Gouranga, 2011).

One popular avenue for achieving effective advertising is through the use of celebrity endorsements (Sliburyte, 2009; Ahmed, et al., 2012). Celebrity endorsements are a powerful tool which advertisers use to attempt to leverage the image and familiarity of the celebrity to promote a brand or a product (Ahmed, et al., 2012).

Brajesh and Gouranga (2011) argue that consumers tend to pay more attention to those adverts that are quickly recognizable and are recallable as being meaningful for themselves on a personal level. In this regard advertisers and marketers use celebrities to enhance the attractiveness of advertisements, to make the advert more memorable, more recallable, credible and desirable to the target audience (Brajesh & Gouranga, 2011).

2.2 Celebrity Endorsements

The use of celebrity endorsements in marketing communications is not a recent development; in fact celebrity endorsements have been around since the late nineteenth century (Erdogan, 1999). An example of the utilization of this marketing tool from that far back would be the use of Queen Victoria in association with Cadbury's Cocoa (Erdogan, 1999).

The emergence of cinema helped to extend the use of endorsements as an advertising technique, and through the growth of commercial radio, in the 1930s, and commercial

television, in the 1950s, celebrity endorsements grew in popularity (McDonough, 1995). In those days however the supply of celebrities, and thus of potential endorsers, was limited and so advertisers were restricted in their search for celebrities who were right for endorsing their brands (Erdogan, 1999).

In the late 1970s the number of celebrities had increased and so too did the number of individuals who were willing to participate in brand endorsements (Erdogan, 1999). Notably, as the numbers of television and film roles increased so did the number of celebrities. At the same time any perceived shame associated with endorsing a brand faded and this in turn led to a wider choice of celebrities for advertisers to select from (Erdogan, 1999).

According to Erdogan (1999) in 1979 the number of adverts which involved a celebrity endorser was around one in every six advertisements, this number rose in 1988 to one in every five advertisements. By 1997 around one in every four adverts included some form of celebrity endorsement (Shimp & Till, 1998). In early 2001 approximately one in five advertisements in the UK featured a celebrity endorser, whereas in the US the numbers were one in four advertisements (Lukas & Seno, 2005).

The ratio of adverts featuring celebrities has remained the same since 2001 with both Austad and Silvera (2004) in 2003 and Goddard, White and Wilber (2008) in 2007 putting the number at around 25% of all advertisements. Goddard, et al. (2009) argue that celebrity endorsements have become one of the most preferred methods of retail advertising by marketers. The use of celebrities in endorsing products has also become a ubiquitous feature within modern marketing (McCracken, 1989).

Marketers use celebrity endorsements because of their greater benefits and possible influence on consumers (Ahmed, et al., 2012). There are many potential advantages of celebrity endorsements as well as potential hazards (Ahmed, et al., 2012) these will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Despite this apparent popularity of celebrity endorsements as an advertising technique, marketing researchers disagree as to which characteristics of the celebrity endorser are most effective in influencing consumers towards purchasing the endorsed brand (Biswas, et al., 2009). The next section discusses the most popular models used to explain the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements.

2.3 Popular Models for Celebrity Endorsements

According to Biswas, et al (2009), there are four popular models which are most often used to describe the characteristics of celebrity endorsements which are believed to be most effective at influencing consumer attitudes and behaviours. These four models are: the source attractiveness model; the meaning transfer model; the match up hypothesis; and the source credibility model (Biswas, et al., 2009). Ahmed, et al (2012), expanded on these four models to include a fifth model to explain the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements. The fifth model, according to Ahmed, et al (2012), is the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Each of these five models is discussed in more detail below.

2.3.1 The Source Attractiveness Model

Marketers have often chosen celebrity endorsers on the basis of their attractiveness in order to gain the dual benefit from their physical appeal towards the target audience and also the effect of their celebrity status on consumers (Erdogan, 1999; Arif & Tanvir, 2012). Amos, et al. (2008) believe that all cultures place a premium on physical attractiveness. Consumers generally tend to form more positive stereotypes about attractive people, and in addition it has been shown that a message source that is more physically attractive is more successful at changing consumers' beliefs and also generating purchase intentions (Jaiprakash, 2008; Arif & Tanvir, 2012). However it has been argued that attractiveness is actually multi-dimensional in nature and entails other characteristics besides physical attractiveness (Amos, et al., 2008).

The source attractiveness model contests that the effectiveness of a celebrity endorsement relies chiefly on three characteristics; they are similarity, familiarity, and likability of the celebrity message source (McCracken, 1989; Arif & Tanvir, 2012). According to Amos, et al. (2008) familiarity and likeability might each make a substantial addition to the predictive ability of the source credibility model when it is used in a celebrity endorsement context.

Similarity is defined as the perceived resemblance between the celebrity endorser and the consumers who are receiving the message (Erdogan, 1999). According to Patel (2009) an effective celebrity endorsement is one in which the target audience is able to associate themselves with the celebrity spokesperson. Consumers are more likely to be influenced by a message which is coming from a source which whom they feel a sense of similarity (Alijosiene, et al., 2007).

Similarity can also include the sense of common goals, lifestyles and needs between the audience and the message source (Arif & Tanvir, 2012). If the spokesperson or endorser and the target audience have similar needs, interests, and lifestyles, then the message which is delivered by the endorser is more likely to be received and understood by the audience (Alijosiene, et al., 2007).

Familiarity can be defined as the consumers' knowledge of a message source gained through repeated exposures to that specific source (McCracken, 1989). An advantage of using a celebrity as a brand endorser is that because of their celebrity status they are already familiar to the target audience.

Likability can be defined as the target audience's affection for the message source resulting from the sources physical attractiveness and also from the sources behaviour (Erdogan, 1999). According to Sliburyte (2009) the attractiveness of a source is not only limited to physical appearance but also encompasses non-physical characteristics such as sporting ability, charisma, grace, and intelligence.

Previous investigations have shown that physically attractive celebrities have a positive effect on the brands which they endorse (Jaiprakash, 2008). Erdogan (1999) states that consumers who are exposed to a more attractive celebrity are more likely to form positive perceptions about the product. Also Erdogan (1999) proved that consumers who are exposed to a more attractive celebrity are more likely to develop purchase intentions. A study by Sliburyte (2009) illustrated that using an endorser who is physically attractive can substantially improve the image of the brand and the product which is associated with them.

Sliburyte (2009) argues that a message source, which is attractive to consumers, generally tends to attract more attention than an unattractive one. Jaiprakash (2008) argued that a celebrity endorser's attractiveness can enhance the recall of the brands message and also enhance the likability of the brand.

The celebrity endorser should be attractive to the target audience in a variety of aspects such as physical appearance, athletic abilities, intellectual capabilities, and lifestyle (Alijosiene, et al., 2007). Furthermore Alijosiene, et al (2007) demonstrated that an endorser that is attractive to consumers as defined above, has a greater chance of enhancing brand recall and also of influencing consumers purchasing behaviour.

2.3.2 The Meaning Transfer Model

Under this model the effectiveness of a celebrity endorser is perceived to depend, in part, upon the meanings which the celebrity brings to the endorsement process (McCracken, 1989). The Meaning Transfer Model states that whenever a celebrity endorses a product, the meanings that customers associate with the endorser will eventually be transferred to the brand (Ahmed, et al., 2012).

According to McCracken (1989) the variety and also the number of meanings associated with celebrities are very large, and every celebrity bears a unique set of meanings based on their personality, lifestyle, attitudes and even their demographics (Ahmed, et al., 2012). There are many distinctions between status, class, gender, and age, as well as lifestyle and personality types, which are represented in the pool of available celebrities. This gives marketers a varied

and subtle collection of meanings from which they can choose when developing a celebrity endorsement strategy (McCracken, 1989).

In the endorsement process the term meaning refers to the overall assessment of what a celebrity represents in the minds of consumers (Jaiprakash, 2008). Celebrities draw specific meanings for consumers from the roles which they assume in both their careers and also in the public eye (Breen, et al., 2003).

According to McCracken (1989) the meaning transfer model encompasses three stages. The meanings, which begin in the dramatic roles which celebrities assume, in stage 1, come to reside in the celebrities themselves (McCracken, 1989). In stage 2, the meanings which have come to reside in the celebrity move from the endorser to the product when the two appear together in the advertisement, that is the meanings associated with the celebrity in the minds of consumers , become associated with the brand, and this in turn leads to brand equity (Jaiprakash, 2008; Ahmed, et al., 2012). So, some of the meanings of the endorser are now the meanings of the brand. In the third and final stage, the meanings associated with the product move from the product to the consumer (McCracken, 1989; Ahmed, et al., 2012). However, according to Shimp and Till (1998), there needs to be a recurring association between the celebrity and the brand through the advertising process in order for the meanings to be transferred from the endorser to the product.

According to Amos, et al (2008) when a consumer identifies with a celebrity, the consumer will purchase the product in the hope of claiming the most important transferred meanings for their own lives. The transfer of meanings from the celebrity to the brand or product and then to the consumer is accomplished through the efforts of the consumers who must take

ownership of the meanings and put them to work in the construction of their own self-image (Breen, et al., 2003). It is argued by Goddard, et al (2008) that the best endorsements take their effectiveness precisely from the successful transfer of meanings from the endorser to the brand and then to the consumer.

The usefulness of a celebrity endorser depends on the congruence between the celebrity and the brand (Jaiprakash, 2008). When the celebrity spokesperson is congruent with the brand which is being endorsed, a transfer of meanings will take place. However when the celebrity is incongruent or unrelated to the brand in any way the transfer of meanings does not seem to take place (Jaiprakash, 2008). The consumer must be able to recognise the essential similarity between the celebrity message source and the brand in the advertisement for the meanings to transfer from the celebrity to the product and finally to the consumer (Breen, et al., 2003).

According to McCracken (1989) it is clear that advertisements can undertake meaning transfer from products to consumers without the aid of celebrity endorsers. However celebrities can offer a much wider range of personal and lifestyle meanings than the advertised brand can provide by itself (McCracken, 1989).

2.3.3 The Match-Up Hypothesis

The Match-up Hypothesis is also sometimes referred to as the celebrity-product fit (Amos, et al., 2008) or also as celebrity-product congruence (Sliburyte, 2009). These three terms all describe the same issue that of the appropriateness of the celebrity which is being used. The Match-up Hypothesis may be defined as the consistency between the characteristics of a

specific celebrity endorser and the attributes of the product which that celebrity is endorsing (Lukas & Seno, 2005).

According to Erdogan (1999) the determining factor of the match-up between a brand and its celebrity endorser is the degree of perceived fit between the image of the celebrity and the image of the brand. Ogunsiji (2012) argues that consumers prefer to choose brands whose personalities match up with their own. As such, there must exist a symbolic match between the perceived image of the endorser and of the brand that is being endorsed (Ogunsiji, 2012).

The Match-up Hypothesis maintains that the message which is conveyed by the celebrity spokesperson should be congruent with the image of the celebrity in order for the advertisement to be effective (Erdogan, 1999; Ahmed, et al., 2012). Advertisers need to match the company's or brand's image, the characteristics of the target market, as well as the personal traits of the celebrity endorser, in order to deliver the brand message effectively (Breen, et al., 2003).

If there is no congruence between the brand's image and the characteristics of the celebrity then the advertisement audience tends to remember the celebrity but not the brand (Breen, et al., 2003). An advertisement in which the endorser and the brand are highly congruent results in a more influential and believable brand message (Ahmed, et al., 2012).

The match-up between the celebrity spokesperson and the brand which is being endorsed is an important dimension to the endorsement process, as it leads to better memorability of the message and also a possible transfer of meanings from the celebrity to the brand (Jaiprakash, 2008) as mentioned in the meaning transfer model. A positive match-up between the celebrity

spokesperson and the endorsed brand arguably has a positive effect on the perceptions of the endorsed brand (Sliburyte, 2009).

According to Ding, et al. (2011) their research found weak support for the Match-up Hypothesis between celebrities and endorsed products.

Every endorsed brand has an individual set of characteristics, and for a celebrity endorsement to have a positive effect on consumers perceptions the characteristics of the celebrity endorser need to be congruent with the characteristics of the brand (Patel, 2009). Advertising a brand through an endorsement with a celebrity who has a relatively high product congruence image tends to lead to a greater advertisement and also message source believability (Erdogan, 1999). Due to this the effectiveness of celebrity endorses vary across different types of products (Amos, et al., 2008).

The absence of a connection between the characteristics of the celebrity and the characteristics of the endorsed brand may lead consumers to believe that the celebrity has been bought out and this will severely damage the credibility of the celebrity endorser and also the advertisement (Erdogan, 1999). The overall effectiveness of using a celebrity spokesperson if mediated by the type of product which is being endorsed (Brand, et al., 1989). The profession of the celebrity endorser should fit with the brand which the celebrity is endorsing (Patel, 2009).

Till (1998) states that: it is important to consider the fit between not only the celebrity and the brand but also the celebrity and the target audience. This is because different groups of consumers may have different associated characteristics for a specific celebrity (Till, 1998).

The consumer must be able to recognise the congruence between the celebrity's characteristics and those of the endorsed brand in order for the endorsement message to be effective (Patel, 2009).

For the purpose of celebrity endorsements the celebrity's image, values, appearance, and reputation must be relevant to the product or brand which is being endorsed (Jaiprakash, 2008). The more the characteristics of the celebrity match up with the characteristics of the endorsed brand, the faster and easier it is for consumers to form links between these two elements in the advertisement and the easier it is to get the brand's message across to consumers (Sliburyte, 2009).

The Match-up Hypothesis does not solely rely on the congruency between the endorser and the brand, but also on the physical attractiveness of the spokesperson (Ahmed, et al., 2012). Ahmed, et al. (2012) found that attractive endorsers are more persuasive than non-attractive endorsers, particularly when the spokesperson is endorsing a product which enhances the attractiveness of the user. Ahmed, et al. (2012) also stated that in order for a brand endorsement to be successful, not only does the spokesperson need to have congruence with the endorsed brand, but the endorser needs to also be perceived as having expertise in relation to the product.

This research by Ahmed, et al. (2012) gives the researcher more motivation to include aspects of the Match-up Hypothesis along with aspects of both the Source Attractiveness model and the Source credibility model.

2.3.4 The Source Credibility Model

In the collection of academic literature used for this research paper, the perceived credibility of brand endorsers has received a considerable amount of attention (Bhatt, et al., 2012). There are many authors who have discussed The Source Credibility model and its components, these are discussed in greater detail below.

According to Patel (2009) a celebrity endorser's credibility is the most important factor in determining the success of any celebrity endorsement campaign. Patel (2009) also states that the credibility of celebrities is questionable and unless the celebrity and the product category are closely linked the message which the celebrity is delivering is questionable. This relates back to the Match-up Hypothesis as discussed earlier in this chapter. This opinion presented by Patel (2009) gives motivation to the researcher to include elements of The Match-up Hypothesis with The Source Credibility Model for use in this research paper.

The source credibility model states that the effectiveness of the message being delivered by an endorser relies on the perceived levels of expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness of that endorser (Erdogan, 1999). Ohanian (1991) argues that an endorsers influence over the target audience depends upon some combination of the above three constructs, and the resultant value of this combination can be defined as the source's perceived credibility.

With regard to the expertise of a message source, both Ohanian (1991) and Pornpitakpan (2003b) define expertise as the extent to which a message source is perceived to be a source of valid assertions. It refers to the experience, skills or knowledge possessed by the endorser

(Erdogan, 1999). Bhatt, et al. (2012) states that: a source's expertise may be defined as that individual's superior ability to solve problems in a given area.

Ohanian (1990) states that a source's perceived level of expertise has a positive impact on attitude change for consumers. A more expert source will generate more intentions to buy the endorsed brand (Erdogan, 1999). According to Ahmed, et al. (2012) the benefit of using an expert endorser is that it enhances brand recall and it positively affects the buying intentions of consumers.

Brajesh and Gouranga (2011) and Bhatt, et al. (2012) believe that expertise has a greater impact on a respondent's reaction to a celebrity endorsement as when compared to the spokesperson's trustworthiness.

Friedman and Friedman (1979) and Bhatt, et al. (2012) believe that trustworthiness is generally the most important factor underlying source credibility. There are many definitions of trustworthiness which are discussed here. Pornpitakpan (2003b) describes trustworthiness as the audience's level of confidence in, as well as acceptance of, the speaker and the message. Ohanian (1991) refers to trustworthiness as the customer's confidence in the communicator for providing a message honestly and in an objective manner. Bhatt, et al. (2012) defines trustworthiness as the degree of confidence that consumers have in the spokespersons intentions and ability to make a valid assertion. According to Ahmed, et al. (2012) trustworthiness can be defined as the extent to which the spokesperson is perceived to be believable, honest and dependable by the message audience.

According to Ohanian (1990) the trustworthiness of a celebrity is highly correlated with the consumers' perceived similarity to the celebrity as well as to the perceived expertise and attractiveness of the celebrity.

Attractiveness is an important dimension of source credibility (Ohanian, 1991). Some studies support attractiveness as being the most important factor in determining the credibility of a spokes person (Bhatt, et al., 2012).

Most adverts make use of endorsers who are physically attractive as most consumers tend to form positive stereotypes about such people, and in addition physically attractive communicators are more successful in changing consumers' beliefs than unattractive communicators (Ohanian, 1991). Physical attractiveness is a significant aspect in an individual's initial judgement of another person, especially of a message source (Ohanian, 1990).

According to Brajesh and Gouranga (2011), an attractive spokesperson or celebrity is more effective in endorsing attractiveness related products and or brands. It has been found that an attractive spokesperson is also more effective for low involvement products than for high involvement products (Brajesh & Gouranga, 2011).

However some authors disagree with this model of source credibility. Patel (2009) and Ahmed, et al. (2012) do not mention attractiveness as being a part of source credibility. According to these authors The Source Credibility Model consists only of the perceived trustworthiness and expertise of the brand endorser. Jaiprakash (2008) defines celebrity credibility as the extent to which a celebrity is perceived to possess expertise relevant to the

product and the extent to which they can be trusted to give an objective opinion on the subject.

Ohanian (1990) and Pornpitakpan (2003a) nevertheless included aspects from the source attractiveness model into the source credibility model to make it more accurate.

Bhatt, et al. (2012) applies Ohanian's Source Credibility Model to fictitious spokes characters. Bhatt, et al. (2012) states that the Source Credibility Model provides an understanding of which fictitious spokes characters can be effective brand endorsers. This is evidence that the Source credibility model, which was designed to measure the effectiveness of celebrity brand endorsers, can be applied to measure the effectiveness of fictitious characters used as brand endorsers.

2.3.5 The Elaboration Likelihood Model

According to Ahmed, et al (2012), The Elaboration Likelihood Model has two key ingredients, these are motivation and ability. Motivation relates to the audiences motivation to perceive the message and comprises of audience involvement and the relevancy of the message to the audience (Ahmed, et al., 2012). Ability refers to the intelligence of the message audience as well as their analytical capability to perceive and process the persuasive message (Ahmed, et al., 2012).

The Elaboration Likelihood Model suggests two paths which lead to a change in attitude: the central route and the peripheral route (Ahmed, et al., 2012). According to Ahmed, et al. (2012) the central route involves the customer actively paying attention to the advertisement

and the customer level of involvement is high. The persuasive message of the advertisement may lead to either favourable or unfavourable responses from consumers which may result in lasting positive or negative attitudes towards the brand or firm (Ahmed, et al., 2012).

According to the peripheral route, the receiver isn't actively involved in engaging with the message and thus lacks motivation (Ahmed, et al., 2012). The audience perceives and evaluates the advertisement only on secondary cues. The attitudes which individuals form about the message, whether favourable or unfavourable, are only temporary (Ahmed, et al., 2012).

The researchers did not use The Elaboration Likelihood Model as part of this research study because the methodology used in this research, which is described in further detain in chapter 4, does not allow for the measurement of the difference in audience motivation. By participating in the survey the respondents are actively involved with the advertising messages and so the effectiveness of the message cannot be measured using motivation as a variable.

2.4 Endorser Types and Involvement

When looking at the use of endorsers in advertisements it can be seen that celebrities are not the only individuals used to endorse brands. Traditionally there have been three basic types of endorsers discussed within the literature; they are the celebrity endorser, the professional expert endorser, and a typical consumer endorser (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). However more modern studies have been concluded on a fourth type or category of brand endorsers this namely being fictitious spokes characters (Bhatt, et al., 2012).

The professional expert endorser may be an individual or even a group which appear with the brand in the advert, these individuals are seen as experts as they possess superior knowledge about the product class which is being endorsed (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). The endorsers have acquired this knowledge as a result of experience, training, or studying (Friedman & Friedman, 1979).

The typical consumer endorser is usually an ordinary person who the target audience expects to have no specialized knowledge about the endorsed product except than the knowledge that can be acquired through the normal use of the product (Friedman & Friedman, 1979).

The fictitious spokes character can be described using the AMOP framework (Appearance, Medium, Origin and Promotion) (Bhatt, et al., 2012). Appearance defines whether the character can be described as either a fictitious human (e.g. actors or illustrations of humans) or non-humans (e.g. animals or personifications of products). Medium is whether the character appears in print, film or any other medium. Origin refers to whether the character originated specifically for the advertisement (Non-celebrity) or if the character originated before the advert for a different purpose (celebrity). Lastly Promotion refers to whether the characters are active (speaking for or demonstrating the product) or if they are passive (symbolic representation) (Bhatt, et al., 2012).

The celebrity endorser as discussed earlier is an individual that is known to the public and appears alongside the brand in an advertisement (Atkin & Block , 1983). The term celebrity endorser is meant in this research to encompass a variety of different forms of endorsements as set out by McCracken (1989). There are four forms of celebrity endorsements; the first is

the explicit mode, where the celebrity specifically states that they endorse the use of that specific product. The second is the implicit mode, where the celebrity states that they themselves use the product. The third form is the imperative mode, where the celebrity states that consumers should use the product. Lastly is the co-present mode, where the celebrity merely appears with the product in the advert (McCracken, 1989).

According to Friedman and Friedman (1979) celebrity endorsers are the most successful type of endorsers when the aim of the advertisement is to generate brand recall, however they state that if the adverts aims are to change the overall attitude towards the endorsed brand, or to generate purchase intentions then the type of endorser which is used needs to be more carefully considered.

When it comes to involvement there are two forms of involvement; namely high involvement and low involvement (Sliburyte, 2009). In the advertising environment, when consumers are highly involved with the brand or product being endorsed, it is not the celebrity endorser who influences their decisions to purchase, but rather it is the strength of the argument which influences these consumers (Sliburyte, 2009). Under conditions where the consumers have a low involvement with the product or service, the type of endorser tends to have a significant impact on the attitudes and perceptions towards the endorsed product (Erdogan, 1999). Sliburyte (2009) found that the effective use of a celebrity endorser proved to be more persuasive than the strength of the argument presented under low involvement conditions.

Erdogan (1999) also found that under low involvement conditions exposure to a celebrity endorser increased the recall of the brand and the product category, however under conditions of high involvement the celebrity endorsement did not influence the level of recall.

Sliburyte (2009) stated that the effectiveness of an advertisement does not rely solely on the appearance of a celebrity in it, but is also dependant on the nature of the product which is being endorsed as well as the level of involvement which consumers display towards the product category.

2.5 Benefits of Celebrity Endorsements

Marketers are willing to invest significant sums of money into an endorsement agreement with a big-name celebrity in the belief that such a celebrity will grant certain benefits to the endorsed brand (Biswas, et al., 2009). There are numerous explanations as to why celebrity endorsements are so useful and why the use of celebrities in advertisements can benefit marketers. This literature review identifies a comprehensive list of these benefits.

There are two main reasons, according to Atkin and Block (1983), why celebrity endorsers are beneficial to marketers. First of all a celebrity spokesperson will attract attention to the advertisement and will help the brand to break through the clutter of marketing messages. Secondly, celebrities are generally viewed as being highly dynamic individuals, having both attractive and likeable qualities.

It is important to attract attention to the advertisement as this creates awareness of the brand which is being endorsed and according to Huang and Radder (2008) in order to purchase the brand consumers must first be made aware of the brand and its features. So in this way celebrity endorsements can be used as a marketing strategy to attract new customers to the brand (Huang & Radder, 2008). Brand awareness is described by Huang and Radder (2008)

as the first stage in the process of moving consumers closer to the decision to buy the brand and ultimately to developing a brand preference. Sliburyte (2009) holds that advertisements featuring a celebrity attract greater attention from consumers but also generate higher intentions to try out the product being endorsed.

According to Brajesh and Gouranga (2011) for the advertising of fast moving consumer goods (FMCGs) celebrity endorsers play a crucial role to generate higher interest levels from the target audience. It was also found that the celebrity endorser had a much greater impact on the level of consumer interest than the other elements of the advertisement, such as the background of the advert and the advertising message (Brajesh & Gouranga, 2011).

Till (1998) however states that, although using a celebrity endorser can help the brand to penetrate through the commercial clutter and can attract attention to the brand, the high cost of using a celebrity endorser would suggest that marketers expect to gain more value from the endorsement than simply attracting attention to the advert. Biswas, et al. (2009) also adds that although the use of a celebrity endorser may attract attention from consumers it may not necessarily translate into the desired purchase behaviour which marketers seek.

In terms of the celebrity being dynamic, this is important for the transfer of meanings between the celebrity, the brand and ultimately the customer. Celebrity endorsers are an effective means of transferring meanings to brands (Breen, et al., 2003). According to Jaiprakash (2008) when a celebrity endorses a brand then some of the meanings which are associated with that celebrity become associated with the brand in the minds of consumers. The outcome of this when using a dynamic endorser is that the brand becomes positioned in a way that is difficult to imitate by competitors (Jaiprakash, 2008).

As for attractiveness and likeability, Austad and Silvera (2004) state that celebrities are particularly effective at being brand endorsers because consumers view them as being highly trustworthy, attractive, believable and likeable. As a result celebrities are more effective as brand endorsers than any other type of endorser, for example: the professional expert, or the typical consumer, (Jaiprakash, 2008). Advertisements featuring celebrity endorsers have been shown to produce more favourable attitudes towards the brand as compared to advertisements using non-celebrity endorsers (Brand, et al., 1989). According to Sliburyte (2009) celebrities, in comparison to other types of advertisers, are more stimulating and thus more capable of generating the behaviour which the marketers desire.

According to Erdogan (1999) due to their fame, celebrity endorsers are not only able to attract and maintain attention, but they are also able to achieve high recall rates for the advertisement. This is important for marketers as brands which are top-of-mind have a higher possibility of being purchased than brands which have a low recall (Huang & Radder, 2008).

Using a celebrity endorser may result in considerable value added to the advertisement (Sliburyte, 2009), and might enhance the value of the product being endorsed (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). This added value may be the result of the celebrity's prestige having a spill over effect onto the product (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). This added value could also possibly result from the fact that marketers can use celebrities to build, refresh and add new dimensions to the brands being endorsed (Breen, et al., 2003). In contradiction, Sliburyte (2009) suggests that relatively few of such advertisements are able to add any meaningful value to the brand.

Breen, et al (2003) ascertained that values can be transferred from a celebrity to the brand by using them together in an advertisement. By transferring these values from the endorser to the brand marketers can save time in terms of creating and developing the brands credibility which is necessary to build the brands equity (Breen, et al., 2003). In this way the celebrity can lend the brand credibility and act as a kind of quality guarantee for the product (Patel, 2009). Huang and Radder (2008) stated that having a high perceived quality will drive the consumer to purchase that brand over competitors' brands. A possible explanation for this transfer of credibility is because consumers generally believe that major celebrities are motivated by genuine affection for the product rather than by the fees they are paid for the endorsement (Austad & Silvera, 2004).

Patel (2009) adds that employing a celebrity is a quick means of differentiating a brand from competitors, and also using the right celebrity can actually deliver the brand message quickly and effectively, without the need for elaborate story telling.

Another instance where endorsements are useful is when a company's image has been tarnished due to some controversial issue. In times like these a possible solution is to hire a popular celebrity as this can improve attitudes towards the company and the brand (Erdogan, 1999).

Celebrity endorsements can be used when marketers are trying to reposition a brand (Biswas, et al., 2009). Marketers can employ a celebrity who has the necessary meanings attached to them in order to establish a new positioning for the existing brand (Erdogan, 1999). At times a celebrity is chosen first and a new product is designed around that individual sins by using this strategy marketers can give products instant personality and appeal, and can quickly led to returns on the investment (Erdogan, 1999).

Erdogan (1999) also states that celebrity endorsements can be a useful tool for entering the global market. Celebrities who enjoy popularity on a world wide scale can help companies to break through into foreign markets and appeal to international audiences (Erdogan, 1999). Global marketing communication strategies can be vulnerable in different countries because of cultural roadblocks such as language, space, relationship, power, risk, and other cultural differences between different countries (Alijosiene, et al., 2007). Celebrities who experience worldwide popularity can help marketers avoid many of these cultural roadblocks and decrease the number of problems which they might face in their global communication strategy (Alijosiene, et al., 2007).

Biswas et al (2009) enumerates five specific benefits of employing celebrity endorsers for a brand, they can be summarised as follows: drawing attention, crisis management, brand repositioning, global marketing, and boosting sales. The above mentioned benefits can generally be categorised under these five types.

Beyond these five common benefits, Till (1998) states that when a celebrity endorsement is used effectively then the endorsement can go beyond just enhancing a brand's competitive position and actually serve a valuable role in improving brand equity. Brand equity is described as the value of a brand, beyond the physical assets associated with its manufacturer, defined in financial terms (Jaiprakash, 2008). For the purpose of marketing brand equity can be extended in a consumer based context to include effects on brand preferences, brand alliances, and also purchase intentions (Jaiprakash, 2008).

2.6 Risks Associated With Using Celebrity Endorsers

Despite the preceding potential benefits, there are also a number of potential risks when using a celebrity as part of a brands marketing campaign (Erdogan, 1999). This literature review has identified a comprehensive list of risks which are associated with the use of celebrities as brand endorsers.

The risks which marketers face are generally caused by the fact that the marketers have no control over the future behaviour of the celebrity once the advertisement has been aired (Shimp & Till, 1998). It is impossible to predict a celebrity's future moral or ethical actions, and so marketers should try to be aware of any weaknesses in a celebrity endorser's character which may lead to future problems (Goddard, et al., 2009).

This problem is important because celebrity endorsements generally involve large sums of money and the success and risks associated with the endorsement varies according to the latest accomplishments or failures in the professional life of the celebrity endorser (Daswani, et al., 2010).

One of the main risks which marketers face is that of negative information being publicized about the celebrity endorser (Goddard, et al., 2009). When an endorser's image becomes tarnished by allegations of illegal, unethical, or even unconventional behaviour then this can create immediate problems for the brand being endorsed (Goddard, et al., 2009). When an endorser's image becomes tarnished by allegations of illegal, unethical, or even unconventional behaviour then this can create immediate problems for the brand being endorsed (Goddard, et al., 2009).

Any negative information about a celebrity endorser can put a firm's brands and image at risk (Amos, et al., 2008) but according to Shimp and Till (1998) the timing of the negative information is also an important factor. The timing of the negative celebrity information has been shown to moderate the effect if the information on consumers brand evaluations (Shimp & Till, 1998). Generally the impact of negative information on consumers' attitudes towards a brand is greater when the information is presented before a strong link has been forged between the celebrity endorser and the brand (Shimp & Till, 1998). When a consumer's knowledge about the brand is not fully developed then, negative information about the brand's celebrity endorser can have a significantly negative impact on the consumer's evaluation of the brand (Farrell, et al., 2000).

Amos, et al (2008) produce conflicting evidence suggesting that a strong associative link between the brand and the celebrity must first be present before any negative information about the celebrity can lower consumers' evaluations of the brand. If the association between the celebrity and the brand is not strongly established in the minds of consumers then it is less likely that those consumers will have a negative attitude towards the brand after the negative information has been publicised about the celebrity endorser.

When consumers are exposed to negative publicity about a celebrity spokesperson then there tends to be a negative transference of this information towards the endorsed product (Goddard, et al., 2009). However; when consumers are exposed to negative publicity about a company or brand then no transference of this negative information towards the celebrity endorser is likely to occur (Goddard, et al., 2009). This means that there is less risk for celebrity endorsers than there is for the brands which are being endorsed.

Another risk which arises from the transfer of values from the celebrity to the brand is that of celebrity controversy. This concept deals with consumers developing negative attitudes about the celebrity endorser's values when the celebrity is caught in the midst of some form of controversy (Patel, 2009). If consumers view the negative values of the celebrity being transferred to the brand then this will lower the consumers' opinions of the brand (Patel, 2009).

Farrell, et al. (2000) asserts that the long-term profitability of a celebrity endorsement may particularly depend on the continued performance of the endorser. Celebrity performance can be defined as the level of achievement which a celebrity attains at any given time within their chosen profession (Amos, et al., 2008). The risk which arises is caused by the fact that there is no guarantee that a celebrity can continue to win sports events, act in successful movies, or produce popular music over extended periods of time (Amos, et al., 2008). If a celebrity endorser fails within their profession then it can lead to a decline in the effectiveness of the endorsement (Patel, 2009).

Another problem which can arise is that of over exposure of a celebrity. Over exposure is caused when a celebrity endorses several different brands (Erdogan, 1999). Celebrities who endorse numerous brands are seen by consumers as being less credible endorsers than those celebrities who only endorse one brand (Austad & Silvera, 2004). If a celebrity's image is tied to many brands then the impact of the endorsement with each product may lessen sins the relationships between the celebrity and each of the brands is no longer distinctive (Erdogan, 1999). This can not only compromise the value of the celebrity as perceived by consumers but it can also have a detrimental effect on the credibility of the celebrity and the

endorsement, which will lower opinions of the brand (Erdogan, 1999). Patel (2009) states that, when a celebrity is involved in multiple endorsements it reduces brand recall and also decrease the popularity of the brands.

Patel (2009) raises the issue of the celebrity possibly overshadowing the brand which is being endorsed. This is caused when the celebrity in the advertisement is remembered more than the brand which they are supposed to be endorsing (Patel, 2009). A common concern with endorsements is that consumers will focus all of their attention onto the celebrity and fail to notice the brand which is being promoted (Erdogan, 1999). In this way the advantage of attracting attention to the advertisement using a celebrity is lost because attention is not directed at the brand being endorsed.

Another risk which tends to be unusual is for celebrities to suddenly change their image (Erdogan, 1999). This is an unusual occurrence but when it does occur it can spell failure for the endorsement campaign (Erdogan, 1999).

The last risk is when a celebrity experiences a drop in popularity (Erdogan, 1999). Often uncontrollable events such as the celebrity getting sick or injured can limit the celebrity's media coverage, which in turn can lower their popularity level and their effectiveness as brand endorsers (Goddard, et al., 2009). Anderson, et al. (2007) state that generally the lever of celebrity decays with age, meaning that as a celebrity matures they tend to become outdated and fall out of popularity with consumers. There are exceptions to this finding however such as a few celebrities who died young at the height of their careers such as James Dean and Marilyn Monroe (Anderson, et al., 2007). Generally when a celebrity's level of

popularity falls; their effectiveness as a brand endorser tends to decline also (Amos, et al., 2008).

Erdogan (1999) summarizes these risks, stating that the benefits of using a celebrity endorser can be markedly reversed if the celebrity, is involved in a controversial incident, loses credibility by endorsing too many brands, suddenly changes their image, overshadows the brand which is being endorsed, experiences a drop in popularity, is the centre of negative publicity, or fails to perform within their specific career. At times celebrity endorsers may even become a liability to the brand which they endorse (Shimp & Till, 1998).

As a result of these risks associated with traditional celebrities that this research, into the effectiveness of using video game characters as celebrity endorsers, was undertaken.

2.7 Fictitious Characters as Brand Endorsers

Experts believe that fictitious or animated spokes-characters are very effective endorsers for brands in advertisements (Bhatt, et al., 2012). The reason these characters can be more attractive to audiences is because human endorsers may degrade their image in the eyes of the public by engaging in various activities and also because it is critical that the endorser matches with the brand to create a successful advertisement (Bhatt, et al., 2012).

Fictitious characters may be defined as either fictitious human characters (who bear resemblance to humans by their physical characteristics) or as fictitious non-human characters (such as animated animals or personifications) (Bhatt, et al., 2012). This research study focused on fictitious human characters as the study investigated the use of video game

characters which had a human appearance rather than any animalistic or mythical characteristics. Future studies may be conducted to investigate the difference perceived in video game characters with either human or non-human characteristics when being used as brand endorsers.

Historically the most important outcome for using fictitious spokes-characters was that they created unique brand or company images (Bhatt, et al., 2012). This may be achieved by the fictitious endorser gaining and holding the audience's attention, by helping the advert to stand out of the clutter, or because fictitious characters have a superior ability to make believable and acceptable claims about the brand (Bhatt, et al., 2012).

Bhatt, et al. (2012) argue that fictitious spokes-characters have the ability to affect consumers purchase intentions. Bhatt, et al (2012) also believe that fictitious characters create more memorable long term links between the endorser and the brand or firm being endorsed.

In their research, Bhatt, et al (2012) found that fictitious spokes-characters received more positive responses for: attitude towards the advertisement, attitude towards the brand, and purchase intentions, as when compared to human celebrity endorsers.

The reason why fictitious human characters were chosen to be used in this research rather than non-human characters is because human like characters are more likeable and trustworthy than non-human spokes characters (Bhatt, et al., 2012).

Bhatt, et al. (2012) found that the majority of fictitious spokes-characters were human and animal personifications followed by product personifications. There have been few cases of

video game characters being used as brand endorsers but when they have been used the results have been favourable for both parties involved in the endorsement (Avery, et al., 2006).

2.8 Using Video Game Characters as Brand Endorsers

In order to use video game characters as celebrity endorsers, for the purposes of this research, it is important to define the meaning of what a celebrity endorser is. A celebrity endorser may be defined as any person who enjoys public recognition for his or her accomplishments in areas which are unrelated to the product which is being endorsed (Atkin & Block , 1983), and who uses this recognition on behalf of a brand by appearing alongside it in an advertisement (Breen, et al., 2003).

Although video game characters are fictional persons (Avery, et al., 2006) the characters fall under this definition when they widely recognized by the public and are used to endorse a brand. Video game characters can enjoy public recognition for the roles they play in video games, which are unrelated to the brands which they endorse and so according to Bustami and Fikry (2012) video game characters are able to be seen as celebrities. By using these characters alongside brands in advertisements it can be argued that these characters are in fact acting as celebrity endorsers.

For the purpose of this research we have chosen a specific type of video game character to be used as a brand endorser. We can describe this type of video game character by applying the AMOP Framework which was discussed earlier. Firstly the appearance of the video game characters is fictitious human. The medium which the characters originally appear is in video

games, but the advertisements they were featured in was be print medium. The origin of the characters is from non-advertising origin as they are originally characters from video games, so they can be described as fictitious celebrities which supports out research methodology further. And lastly the characters will be passively promoting the product by appearing along-side the product in the advertisements.

The reason for looking at video game characters is that it is believed that video game characters can perform the same role as traditional human celebrities without the risks which are usually associated with the use of celebrities as brand endorsers (Avery, et al., 2006; Bustami & Fikry, 2012).

First of all video game characters do not suffer the same aging problem as traditional celebrities (Avery, et al., 2006) and thus they do not have the same problem of celebrity decay as Anderson et al (2007) mentioned for traditional celebrities. The image of a brand character can remain youthful and their image can be adjusted and updated to remain popular indefinitely

Secondly companies have greater controlling power over created endorser as they have developed these characters (Erdogan, 1999). A game character is created by game makers who have complete control over the characters actions. There is no chance of the character failing in their profession, or acting in an unpredictable way (Avery, et al., 2006).

Finally a game characters personality cannot be tarnished by their actions, this is because the game character cannot get messily divorced or get caught experimenting with drugs (Avery, et al., 2006). Game characters cannot behave unpredictably and risk the reputation of the

brand by behaving in a controversial way (Avery, et al., 2006). Game characters are fictional, animated personalities and so they are generally immune to negative publicity (Shimp & Till, 1998).

In summary the problems which are generally found in using traditional celebrity endorsements may be addressed by using popular game characters as a celebrity for endorsement purposes. Another benefit that was found by Erdogan (1999) is that created endorsers where more effective at creating the desired perceptions of the endorsed product than ordinary celebrity endorsers.

Bhatt, et al. (2012) states several other benefits to using fictitious spokes-characters as brand endorsers. Firstly fictitious spokes-characters can be used to create unique brand or brand images, secondly they help to gain and hold the audience's attention by standing out of the clutter, and thirdly fictitious characters have a superior ability to make believable and acceptable claims and lastly to possibly affect the purchase intentions of consumers (Bhatt, et al., 2012).

Bhatt, et al. (2012) argued that consumers notice advertisements which feature fictitious spokes characters more than advertisements featuring the other types of brand endorsers. Research has shown that the use of fictitious spokes-characters lead to more accurate recall and quicker consumer response as when compared to human celebrity endorsers (Bhatt, et al., 2012). Animated spokes-characters were found to be more creative and consumers displayed more positive responses for attitude towards the advertisement, attitude towards the brand and purchase intentions as when compared to human brand endorsers (Bhatt, et al., 2012).

This strategy of using video game characters as brand endorsers has been used in the past; the first example of this is the brand of energy drink named Lucozade being endorsed by the famous Tomb Raider heroine, Lara Croft (Avery, et al., 2006). The aim of this strategy for Lucozade was to make the brand more attractive to the core 18 to 24 year old market by building a campaign around a popular game character (Avery, et al., 2006). Although this campaign used a game character as an endorser, the campaign was not aimed specifically at those consumers who played the games but also to non-gamers in the target market (Avery, et al., 2006).

Video game characters are not only able to promote products which are embedded within the video games themselves, but also could be used to promote products in real life (Bustami & Fikry, 2012).

Although previously there are many examples of cartoon characters reaching celebrity status there was no precedent before the introduction of Lara Croft for celebrities to emerge from the video game industry (Avery, et al., 2006). The new gaming phenomenon is something that no marketer, brand owner, or advertiser can afford to ignore (Avery, et al., 2006).

There has been experimentation with marketing and games via certain platforms such as Facebook, but Csernayanszky (2012) and Avery, et al (2006) state that these are not tools built for marketers and do not offer much in terms of depth of content or audience diversity (Csernyanszky, 2012). According to Csernyanszky (2012) marketers and game designers share common goals and should work together to strengthen their positions.

In the case of Lara Croft endorsing Lucozade, the partnership proved to be mutually beneficial for both of their parties concerned, the association with Lara Croft boosted the sales of Lucozade, at the same time it helped to drive consumers to the Tomb Raider games (Avery, et al., 2006; Peter, 2011).

A more recent case where video game characters were used as brand endorsers is Prada using Square Enix's Final Fantasy XIII-2 characters Lightning, Noel, Snow, Sazh, and Hope as endorsers for their 2012 Spring/Summer men's collection (VideoGamer, 2012). There is a magnitude of possibilities when it comes to blending advertising and video game characters; it is possible that in the near future video game heroes will be used more often to endorse brands (Peter, 2011).

This strategy is an opportunity for brands to reach a fast growing segment of gamers (Peter, 2011). Gamers represent a significant new group of consumers which businesses are able to target, and there are multiple new opportunities opening up for brands and products of all types (Avery, et al., 2006). Video games are one of the fastest-growing industries, and also the newest form of mass media (Caperton, 2012; Lamothe, 2012).

There is an outdated belief that all video gamers are young boys however research shows that 82 percent of game players are over the age of 18, in fact boys under the age of 17 accounts for only 13 percent of gamers (Caperton, 2012). More grown-ups that young people play video games, more than half of all American adults play video games of some kind (Jones, et al., 2008). However younger adults are also significantly more likely than any other gamer group to play games (Jones, et al., 2008). Female gamers make up 40% of the gamer segment

(Jackson, 2011). . In fact women over the age of 18 represent the fastest growing market for video games (Caperton, 2012).

The gaming industry continues to grow at an incredible rate (Lamothe, 2012), in the United States the industry brought in more than $10.5 billion in revenue, that is 273 million units sold in the year 2009 (Jackson, 2011). In the South Africa, the gaming industry continues to grow; in 2011 the gaming industry made over R1.7 billion in revenue. In 2010 there were 3.48 million individual games sold and this number increased to 3.86 million games sold in 2011 (Whitford, 2012).

2.9 Marketing Implications

This research is useful for marketers as this growing market is an opportunity for marketers to increase sales of certain types of products (Bustami & Fikry, 2012). The use of video game characters as brand endorsers gives marketers the opportunity to target a growing market segment of video gamers (Bustami & Fikry, 2012).

Ding, et al. (2011) argued that celebrity endorsements can be used to broaden the brands customer base and make the brand appealing to new consumer segments. The value of video game characters could then be argued to be to target new consumer segments rather than current target segments for the brand. According to Avery, et al. (2006) using video game characters as brand endorsers can actually help to reposition the brand into a new customer segment.

In most cases celebrities have fans and these fans may translate into a specific target market nice for the brand which the celebrity endorses (Ogunsiji, 2012). Video game characters also have fans and as such they could have the same use as celebrities in creating a new nice target market for the brand which competitors may not easily be able to copy.

Ogunsiji (2012) states that to be successful, brands need to convince consumers that they carry a different image and value from their competitors and other competing products, using video game characters to endorse the brand is a possible way to form such a different image in the minds of consumers. It has been found that using the right spokesperson for the brad helped to improve the marketability of the brand amongst its competitors (Ogunsiji, 2012). So the use of video game characters as spokespersons for a brand can help to improve the marketability of the brand if the advertisement is aimed at an appropriate target market.

This research is also useful to marketers as most consumers establish their preferences for brands, between the ages of 15 and 25 (Huang & Radder, 2008). According to Huang and Radder (2008) marketers should make use of potential opportunities to create brand awareness with this group and to establish future brand preferences and possibly future brand loyalty. Gamers in this age group represent a significant group of consumers for marketers to target (Avery, et al., 2006). Young consumers can play an important role in the marketplace as young consumers may exert significant influence on spending within the house hold on a number of different products (Huang & Radder, 2008).

The contribution of this study is in addressing an area of marketing which has not been well researched as yet. It will also address consumer perceptions about video game celebrities as

well as current market trends. Lastly this research will investigate an advertising tool which has the potential to become a future marketing trend.

2.10 Conclusion

Austad and Silvera (2004) state that due to the high costs which are associated with the activities of developing marketing strategies and producing advertisements it becomes imperative that advertising messages effectively increase awareness of the product, interest in the product, and also intentions to purchase the product. Celebrity endorsements have been shown to be an effective marketing tool for achieving these objectives, and also for achieving other benefits for marketers and the endorsed brands.

From this research it can be concluded that the effectiveness of a celebrity endorser is found to be moderated by several factors; they are the attractiveness and the credibility of the celebrity, the fit between the celebrity and the product they are endorsing, the type of message and product being endorsed, the level of involvement which consumes have in regards to the product, the number of endorsements which the celebrity is involved with, the characteristics of the target audience, and lastly the meanings which are attached to the celebrity (Sliburyte, 2009).

Besides these above factors the economic costs of the celebrity endorser, the compatibility with the company's overall marketing strategy, and also the potential risks associated with celebrity endorsements must all be considered when making the decision to use a celebrity endorse (Sliburyte, 2009).

As possible a solution to this problem this research has investigated the use of video game characters as celebrity brand endorsers. The reason for this is because video game characters are celebrities in their own right but they are not plagued by the same risks and problems as ordinary celebrities (Avery, et al., 2006; Shimp & Till, 1998). Using a video game character as a brand endorsed has been done in the past, an example being the use of Lara Croft to endorse Lucozade (Avery, et al., 2006), and this kind of endorsement has been shown to boost sales (Bustami & Fikry, 2012).

The use of video game characters as brand endorsers is an area of marketing which is under researched (Peter, 2011). The researchers believe that this empirical study will help to lessen the gap in the literature by providing useful insights into the use of video game characters as brand endorsers.

Chapter 3 will discuss the theoretical model used in this study. It also revisits the hypotheses for this research. Chapter 3 looks at the components of the model as well as the indicators of each of these components respectively. The chapter also includes a discussion of the managerial implications of the study.

Chapter 3

Research Model and Components

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 encapsulates a comprehensive list of all the relevant empirical studies which dealt with celebrity endorsements either directly or indirectly. It discussed the use of fictitious characters as brand endorsers. It entailed a review of the video game industry as well a review of all the relevant empirical studies surrounding brand endorsements by video game characters.

This chapter discusses the proposed model used for this study. The chapter then revisits the research hypotheses. This chapter looks at each of the hypotheses individually, the components of the models from which these hypotheses stem, and the indicators attached to each of these components. The chapter then ends off by discussing the mangerial implications of and also the limitations of the proposed model.

3.2 Model

The model which was used for this research consists of a combination of the components of three models which were used in previous studies. These three models are “The Source Attractiveness model”, “The Match-up Hypothesis” and “The Source Credibility model”. In the review of the secondary research for this paper it was discovered that there appears to be

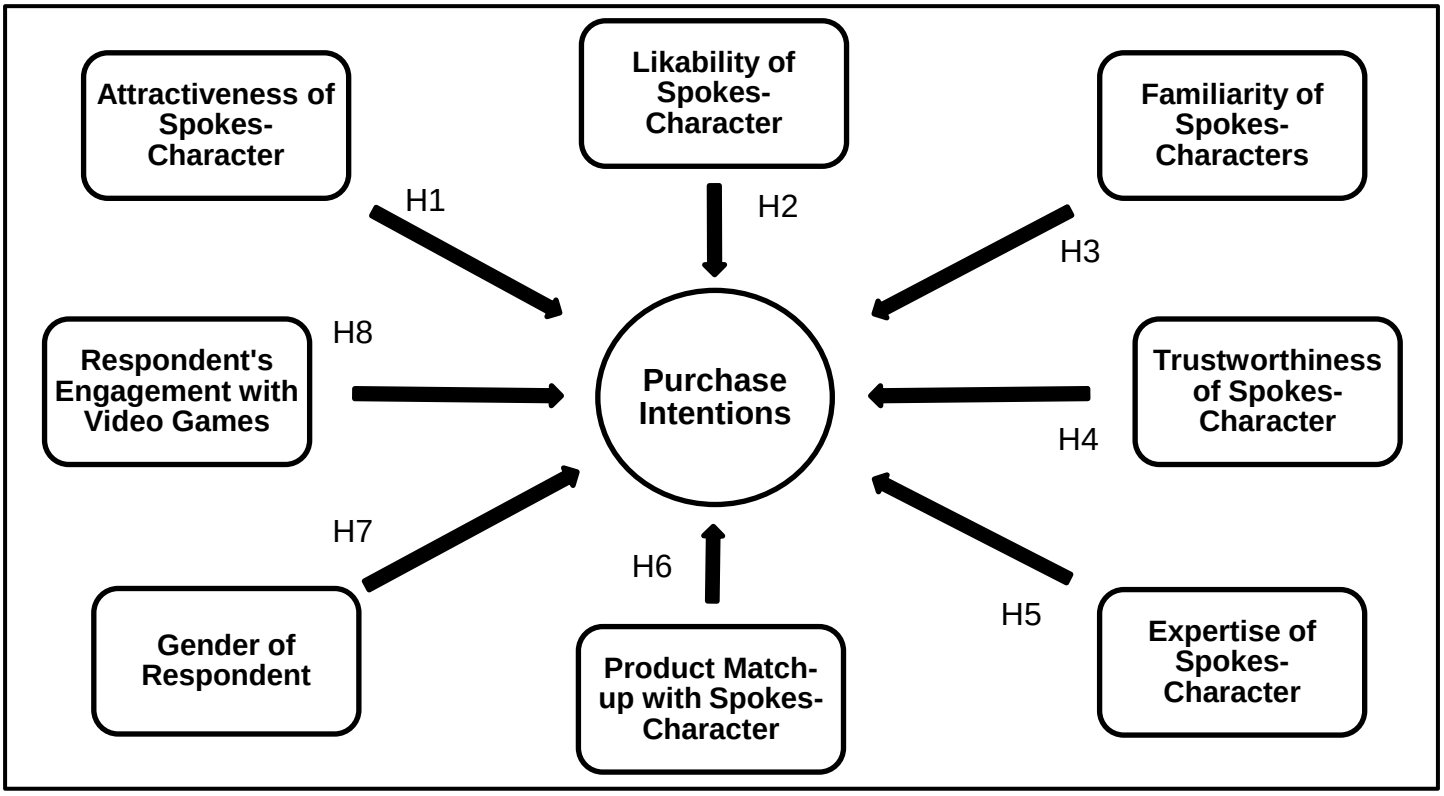
an overlap between the components of these three models, as mentioned in the previous chapter.

Unfortunately because of the methodology and time frame in which this research was undertaken, the 2 other popular models of brand endorsements could not be tested accurately. Firstly, "The Meaning Transfer Model" could not be tested because the timeframe of the research study was too short and there was no time to investigate the progress of the "meaning" associated with the brand endorser through the three stages of the model.

Secondly, "The Elaboration Likelihood Model" requires there to be an investigation of whether the message was received through the central route or the peripheral route. However because the research was undertaken through the use of a survey, and participants were asked to engage directly with the advertisements, it was not possible to measure how the message would have been perceived through the peripheral route, and thus it could not be tested with accuracy. Because these models could not be tested with accuracy they were excluded from the overall model which was tested during this research study.

Below, in the figure, is a graphical representation of the model which was tested during this research paper. The model has been dubbed "The Theoretical Model of Fictitious human Spokes Characters" and its components are discussed later on in this chapter.

Figure 3.1: The Theoretical Model of Fictitious Human Spokes Characters



Source: Adapted from McGuire (1985), Ohanian (1990) and Kamins and Gupta (1994)

This model combines the constructs found in the Source Attractiveness Model, which was developed by McGuire in 1985, the Match-up Hypothesis, developed by Kamis and Gupta in 1994, and the Source Credibility Model, developed by Ohanian in 1990.

The researcher discovered an overlap between the constructs of attractiveness used in the Source Attractiveness Model as well as the Source Credibility Model. Both models named attractiveness as one of the core components of the model but they also did not rely solely on the physical attractiveness of the spokesperson to determine the strength of the endorsement. The Source Credibility Model included such non-physical characteristics such as the trustworthiness and expertise of the spokesperson as constructs in the model, whereas the

Source Attractiveness Model included such non-physical characteristics as the likability and the familiarity of the spokesperson as constructs in the model (Ahmed, et al., 2012).

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Ahmed, et al. (2012) argued that the Match-up Hypothesis does not solely rely on the congruency between the endorser and the brand, but also on the physical attractiveness of the. Ahmed, et al. (2012) also stated that in order for a brand endorsement to be successful, not only does the spokesperson need to have congruence with the endorsed brand, but the endorser needs to also be perceived as having expertise in relation to the product.

From this explanation it is evident that there is in fact an overlap between the Match-up Hypothesis and both the Source Attractiveness Model and the Source credibility Model. All three models share a construct which measures the perceived physical attractiveness of the spokesperson who is endorsing the brand and the Match-up Hypothesis and the Source Credibility Model both make use of a construct to measure the perceived level of expertise associated with the brand endorser.

The Theoretical Model of Fictitious Human Spokes Characters can be summarised as three major components, each of which consists of a combination of measurable constructs. These three major components are: the credibility of the spokes-character, the attractiveness of the spokes-character and the match-up between the spokes-character and the brand or product being endorsed.

This model also includes two other constructs which are unrelated to the previous models of brand endorsements. The first construct is the “gender of respondents” this construct is

designed to test the effect which the gender of the respondent has on the purchase intentions towards the endorsed brand. The researchers believed that there would be little difference between the purchase intentions of males and females for the brands endorsed by video game characters because video games are popular among both male and female consumers (Avery, et al., 2006).

The second construct which was added to this model was the construct of "engagement with video games". This added construct was simply to test whether there was difference in the purchase intentions of respondents who play video games versus those respondents who do not play video games. It was difficult to predict before the research was undertaken whether the amount of engagement the respondents had with video games, before the research was undertaken, would have an effect on their attitudes towards the endorsements by the video game characters or how it would affect the purchase intentions of the respondents when they had viewed the advertisements.

The credibility of a spokesperson is a very important thing to consider when using that person to endorse a brand. Although the researcher has broken down the Source Credibility Model into its components for the purpose of using them in this model, it is still valuable to look at the concept of "source credibility" as a whole.

The credibility of a source can be defined as the extent to which a message source is perceived as having expertise which is relevant to the communication topic and the extent to which the source can be trusted to provide an objective opinion on the subject (Jaiprakash, 2008). The term source credibility is commonly used to denote a message source's characteristics that positively affect the receiver's acceptance of a message (Ohanian, 1990).

The more credibility that a source possesses, then the better the image created for the brand that is being endorsed (Sliburyte, 2009).

Patel (2009) also believes that if a message source is perceived as being credible, then the perceived quality of the product which is being endorsed will be higher. This is beneficial to marketers because a higher perceived quality of a brand is believed to drive consumers to choose that brand over competitive brands (Huang & Radder, 2008).

The credibility of the product endorser affects the persuasiveness of the advertisement when the advertisement contains a low involvement product (Cacioppo, et al., 1983). According to Cacioppo, et al. (1983) the celebrity status of the message source has no effect on attitudes when the advertisement concerns a product of high involvement.

High credibility becomes even more important when consumers hold a negative view of the brand, because the credible source prevents counterarguments to the message and thus as a result the message becomes more persuasive (Breen, et al., 2003). The more favourable a consumer's perceptions of these three credibility components are, the more the endorser is viewed as being a credible source of brand information and a credible representation for the brand (Lukas & Seno, 2005). Some studies have found that when the credibility model is used to evaluate an endorsers effectiveness, trustworthiness and expertise were found more important than the spokespersons attractiveness (Bhatt, et al., 2012).

The model which is illustrated in the figure above has numerous constructs which were believed to influence the purchase intentions of the respondents. These constructs were tested for reliability and the results were recorded in in the following chapters of this research paper.

The constructs which were used in this model are each made up of a number of indicators which were tested using a survey, these constructs and their indicators are discussed in greater detail below.

The analysis of these elements looks at the score given to the brand endorser and correlates them to the purchase intention. The higher the score given by each of the respondents in the sample group for each element of the model then the higher the purchase intention is likely to be (Pornpitakpan, 2003a). The score for each of these components are based on the indicators of each of these components respectively (Pornpitakpan, 2003b).

3.3 Components of the Model

Below is an in depth description of each of the constructs which make up the proposed model for this research. Each section also supplies a list of the indicators for the respective constructs which were tested in this research paper.

3.3.1 Attractiveness of the Spokes-Character

Attractiveness is an important dimension of a source's credibility (Ohanian, 1991). Most adverts make use of endorsers who are physically attractive as most consumers tend to form positive stereotypes about such individuals, and in addition physically attractive communicators are more successful in changing consumers' beliefs than unattractive communicators (Ohanian, 1991). Physical attractiveness is a significant aspect in an individual's initial judgement of another person, especially of a message source (Ohanian, 1990).

Attractive communicators are consistently more liked than unattractive communicators and have a more positive impact on the products with which they are associated (Ohanian, 1990). Erdogan (1999) found that an attractive endorser enhances attitudes towards both the advertisement and also the brand. Further than that Erdogan (1999) also found that an attractive endorser creates more purchase intentions than an unattractive endorser. One explanation for these findings is that an attractive message source tends to receive more attention than a less attractive source (Jaiprakash, 2008). Austad and Silvera (2004) however suggest that these positive attitudes from admiration of or perceived similarity to the message source. Similarity forms a part of familiarity which is discussed in detail below.

Consumers like products more when they are endorsed by an attractive celebrity than when they are endorsed by an unattractive celebrity, and also attractive celebrities create more purchase intentions than unattractive celebrities (Erdogan, 1999; Sliburyte, 2009). Jaiprakash (2008) states that a physically attractive endorser can facilitate attitude change towards the brand being endorsed.

However, Amos, et al. (2008) argue that the attractiveness construct for a brand endorser is multi-dimensional in nature. Sliburyte (2009) suggests that an endorser's attractiveness is not limited to their physical characteristics but may also encompass such non-physical characteristics as intelligence, grace, or charisma. Amos, et al. (2008) agree stating that the attractiveness construct encompasses not only physical attractiveness but also other virtuous characteristics which consumers might perceive as attractive about the endorser. Breen, et al. (2003) argue that attractiveness encompasses familiarity, similarity and also likeability of the product endorser. These constructs are discussed separately below.

Austad and Silvera (2004) disagree with the conventional belief of attractiveness. Austad and Silvera (2004) state that it is not the perceived levels of attractiveness, likability, or similarity of the endorser which influence the attitudes towards the endorsed product; but instead it is the endorser's sense of style and the endorser's perceived knowledge of the product which is most important in influencing attitudes. Erdogan (1999) even states that, in certain circumstances, the attractiveness of the celebrity may be inappropriate, irrelevant, or sometimes even undesirable.

The attractiveness aspect of a message source tends to have a greater impact on persuasion under conditions of low involvement rather than conditions of high involvement (Cacioppo, et al., 1983). Under conditions of low involvement, consumers' attitudes tend to be affected by simple acceptance and rejection cues within the message context, such as the perceived attractiveness of the message source, and are less affected by the quality of the argument (Cacioppo, et al., 1983).

For the purpose of this model the component of attractiveness will be measured mostly on the physical characteristics of the spokes-character. The attractiveness component will be measured using the scale developed by Ohanian in 1990. The scale is made up of five indicators which the component is to be evaluated on, they are listed below:

- Attractive – Unattractive
- Classy – Not Classy
- Beautiful – Ugly
- Elegant – Plain
- Sexy – Not Sexy

This scale was used to investigate the perceived level of attractiveness for the video game characters which were used in this study. It measured the attractiveness of these spokes-characters and it also measured the effect of the spokes-character's attractiveness on the purchase intentions of the consumers involved in the study's sample group.

Austad and Silvera (2004) state that the importance of attractiveness is limited by the degree to how well the endorser's attractiveness fits with the advertised product. For example: physical attractiveness might be useful when selling beauty care products but not when selling computer software.

3.3.2 Likeability of the Spokes-Character

Likeability was found to be one of the proffered criteria for choosing a spokesperson to appear along-side the brand (Patel, 2009). Likeability can be defined as the affection for the spokesperson as a result of the spokesperson's physical appearance, reputation and behaviour (Amos, et al., 2008).

Although the informational content of an advertisement may be the most important determinant to affect purchase intentions under certain circumstances, in other circumstances, such non-content attributes as the likeability of the spokesperson is the most influential element of the advertisement (Cacioppo, et al., 1983). Likeability may be the underlying element which persuades consumers towards taking action (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Research has shown that when an endorsement advert concerns a low-involvement product then the likeability of the spokesperson is a very potent determinant of consumers' attitudes towards the product (Cacioppo, et al., 1983).

The scale which was used in this research is made up of five indicators which the component of likeability is to be evaluated on, they are listed below:

- Likeable – Unlikable
- Pleasant – Unpleasant
- Nice – Nasty
- Affable – Unfriendly
- Amiable – Disagreeable

This scale was used to investigate the perceived level of likeability for the video game characters which were used in this study. It measured the likeability of these spokes-characters and it also measured the effect of the spokes-character's likeability on the purchase intentions of the consumers involved in the study's sample group.

3.3.3 Familiarity of the Spokes-Character

Familiarity may be seen to encompass the knowledge about the spokesperson gained through repeated exposures and the similarity the target audience feels with the message source (Arif & Tanvir, 2012). Similarity can form from a sense of common goals, lifestyles or needs shared by the spokesperson and the audience (Arif & Tanvir, 2012; Ohanian, 1990).

The positive attitudes consumers bare towards celebrity endorsers may result from the perceived similarity between the audience and the celebrity (Austad & Silvera, 2004). Consumers are more likely to be influenced by an endorser with whom they feel a sense of familiarity (Alijosiene, et al., 2007).

The scale which was used in this research is made up of four indicators which the component of familiarity is to be evaluated on, they are listed below:

- Familiar – Unfamiliar
- Similar – Dissimilar
- Alike – Unalike
- Relatable – Unrelated

This scale was used to investigate the perceived level of familiarity for the video game characters which were used in this study. It measured the familiarity of these spokes-characters and it also measured the effect of the spokes-character's familiarity on the purchase intentions of the consumers involved in the study's sample group.

Some research supplies that the attitude formed by consumers towards the brand endorser is based on the endorser's sense of style and their perceived knowledge about the product, but not on general ratings of the likeability or similarity of the endorser (Austad & Silvera, 2004).

3.3.4 Trustworthiness of the Spokes-Character

The trustworthiness component in a brand endorsement is based on the consumer's degree of confidence in, and their level of acceptance of, the message source and also the message (Ohanian, 1990; Pornpitakpan, 2003b). According to Ohanian (1991) trustworthiness refers to a consumer's confidence in the endorser for providing information in an honest and objective manner.

Trustworthiness is highly correlated with consumers' perceived similarity to the message source, it is also correlated to the source's perceived expertise, and the source's perceived attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990).

Friedman and Friedman (1979) believe that trustworthiness is most likely the most significant dimension underlying the credibility of a source. The perceived trustworthiness of a message source has been shown to have a greater effect on attitude change than perceived expertise (Amos, et al., 2008). Trustworthiness is an important predictor of the effectiveness of a brand endorsement (Amos, et al., 2008; Austad & Silvera, 2004).

The trustworthiness component will be measured using the scale developed by Ohanian in 1990. The scale is made up of five indicators which the component is to be evaluated on, they are listed below:

- Trustworthy – Untrustworthy
- Dependable – Undependable
- Honest – Dishonest
- Reliable – Unreliable
- Sincere – Insincere

This scale was used to investigate the perceived level of trustworthiness for the video game characters which were used in this study. It measured the trustworthiness of these spokes-characters and it also measured the effect of the spokes-character's trustworthiness on the purchase intentions of the consumers involved in the study's sample group.

An endorser's trustworthiness is an important factor for credibility and it is highly correlated with the attractiveness of the endorser (Lukas & Seno, 2005). Celebrity endorsers are

perceived to be both more competent and more trustworthy than non-celebrity endorsers, and as a result of this consumers tend to have more positive feelings towards adverts which feature celebrity endorsers in comparison to advertisements which feature non-celebrity endorsers (Atkin & Block , 1983).

3.3.5 Expertise of the Spokes-Character

The perceived expertise of a brand endorser may be defined as the degree to which a message source is perceived to be a source of valid testimonials (Amos, et al., 2008; Ohanian, 1991). Expertise refers to the experience, knowledge, or skills which are possessed by a brand endorser (Austad & Silvera, 2004; Erdogan, 1999). It does not actually make a difference if the source is really an expert in relation to the product as long as the target audience perceives the endorser as an expert on the subject.

Pornpitakpan (2003b) and Erdogan (1999) state that: an expert source will influence the perceptions of the product which is being endorsed. A brand endorser which is perceived as being more expert has been found to be more persuasive; and has been found to produce more purchase intentions than when compared to non-expert endorsers (Ohanian, 1991).

A receiver's perception of the endorser's expertise positively influences the effectiveness of the source (Amos, et al., 2008). When looking at persuasive communications the source's perceived level of expertise will generally have a positive effect on attitude change (McCracken, 1989; Ohanian, 1990).

The expertise aspect of a message source tends to have a greater impact on persuasion under conditions of low involvement rather than conditions of high involvement (Cacioppo, et al., 1983). Under conditions of low involvement, consumers' attitudes tend to be affected by simple acceptance and rejection cues within the message context, such as the perceived expertness of the endorser, and are less affected by the quality of the argument (Cacioppo, et al., 1983).

Some researchers have suggested that the expertise of a brand endorser is the most important parameter to measure the effectiveness of brand endorsements (Daswani, et al., 2010).

The expertise component will be measured using the scale developed by Ohanian in 1990. The scale is made up of five indicators which the component is to be evaluated on, they are listed below:

- Expert – Non-expert
- Experienced – Inexperienced
- Knowledgeable – Unknowledgeable
- Qualified – Unqualified
- Skilled – Unskilled

This scale was used to investigate the perceived level of expertise for the video game characters which were used in this study. It measured the expertise of these spokes-characters and it also measured the effect of the spokes-character's expertise on the purchase intentions of the consumers involved in the study's sample group.

3.3.6 Gender of the Respondents

According to previous research 40% of individuals who play video games regularly are females, with the remaining 60% being males (Bustami & Fikry, 2012; Jackson, 2011). Bustami and Fikry (2011) also state that as much of 60% of all males in the United States play video games.

Female gamers traditionally accounted for just a fraction of the gaming population, but now they make up one of the fastest growing audiences within the gaming industry (Avery, et al., 2006).

It is possible that the response between males and females may be different because male video game players describe video games as being more important to them compared to females (Bustami & Fikry, 2012). Ding, et al. (2011) reported that consumers find brand endorsers of the same gender more appealing. Men were found to trust men where as women were found to trust women more (Ding, et al., 2011).

Given these previous research findings the researcher included the construct of "Gender of the respondent" into the model in order to investigating the difference in the responses between the male and female respondents in the sample group.

3.3.7 Respondent's Engagement with Video Games

Gamming now commands an ever increasing share of the entertainment market and it is helping to drive consumers' attention away from television, especially among younger people

(Avery, et al., 2006). Recent developments in the gaming industry have helped to develop new social structures and cultural icons among consumers (Avery, et al., 2006).

According to Avery, et al. (2006) gamers are more proactive than traditional consumers and thus think differently from other customer segments. For this reason the researcher has included a construct to test whether the respondent's prior engagement with video games affects their purchase intentions after being exposed to the fictitious advertisement used in this research.

3.3.8 Match-Up between Spokes-Character and Brand

It has been established that a proper match between a product and the endorser can enhance the effectiveness of the endorsement (Amos, et al., 2008; Atkin & Block , 1983; Ding, et al., 2011). The absence of a clear congruence between the product and the spokesperson may lead consumers to disbelieve the brands message (Ding, et al., 2011; Erdogan, 1999). The spokesperson's image, reputation, values and appearance must be relevant to the product which is being endorsed (Jaiprakash, 2008).

Not all celebrities can endorse any product; advertisers need to ensure that the image and character of the celebrity match the nature and image of the product and the target audience (Pornpitakpan, 2003a). McCracken (1989) found that some product categories were incompatible with the use of celebrity endorsements. If the product and brand endorser do not match up then it is possible that the endorser is remembered but not the endorsed product (Ding, et al., 2011). Amos, et al. (2008) found that endorsement effectiveness tends to vary across different product types.

Some research finds that the persuasiveness of the endorsement has everything to do with the celebrity endorser and nothing to do with the product (McCracken, 1989). Ding, et al. (2011) found weak support for the match-up hypothesis between celebrities and endorsed products.

However according to Jaiprakash (2008) the math-up between the spokesperson and the endorsed brand is an important dimension. The match-up between the endorser and the brand leads to better memorability for the brand message (Jaiprakash, 2008).

In order to measure the level of perceived match-up between the spokes-character and the product the researcher used the following five indicators:

- Match: That is perceived level of match between the spokes-character and the product being endorsed.
- Fit: That is perceived level of fit between the spokes-character and the product being endorsed.
- Compatible: That is perceived level of compatibility between the spokes-character and the product being endorsed.
- Consistent: That is perceived level of consistence between the spokes-character and the product being endorsed.

This scale was used to investigate the perceived level of match-up between the video game characters and the products which were used in this study. It measured the effect of the perceived level of match-up between the video game characters and the products which were used in this study on the purchase intentions of the consumers involved in the study's sample group.

3.3.9 Purchase Intentions of Respondents

In order to measure purchase intention Pornpitakpan (2003a) used five indicators which can be used to describe different levels of purchase intentions; namely:

- Inquire: That is the likelihood that the respondent would find out more about the product at their local store.
- Look for product: That is the likelihood that the respondent would look for the product in their local stores.
- Look for product information: That is the likelihood that the respondent would look for more information about the product.
- Consider: That is the likelihood that the respondent would consider buying the product.
- Purchase: That is the likelihood that the respondent would actually purchase the product if it was endorsed by the specific character in question.

These indicators were considered on the basis of likelihood with respondents being questioned as to whether they were likely or unlikely to inquire about the product, look for the product in store, look for information about the product, consider buying the product or actually purchase the endorsed product (Pornpitakpan, 2003a).

The reason for including purchase intention in the model is because of the high costs associated with using an endorser in an advertisement (Till, 1998). Marketers expect to gain far more value from their investment in the endorsement than simply attracting the attention of consumers (Till, 1998).

According to findings from Ding, et al. (2011), the incremental benefits which are gained through the use of a celebrity endorser are closely matched by the incremental costs

associated with the contract of having the celebrity appear along-side the brand in the advertisement. Thus if the endorsement does not improve attitudes and purchase intentions towards the product then the cost of hiring the celebrity spokesperson will outweigh the benefits.

3.4 Hypotheses

According to the Theoretical Model of Fictitious Human Spokes Characters which was tested during this dissertation there are eight distinct hypotheses which arise from the effects of the eight constructs on the purchase intentions of consumers. In order to reach the objective of this study the hypotheses which will be tested are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: The video game character's perceived attractiveness is positively related to purchase intention.

This hypothesis is based on the proposed relationship between the perceived attractiveness of the spokes-character and the purchase intentions of the respondents.

Hypothesis 2: The video game character's perceived likeability is positively related to purchase intention.

This hypothesis is based on the proposed relationship between the perceived likability of the spokes-character and the purchase intentions of the respondents.

Hypothesis 3: The video game character's perceived familiarity is positively related to purchase intention.

This hypothesis is based on the proposed relationship between the perceived familiarity of the spokes-character and the purchase intentions of the respondents.

Hypothesis 4: The video game character's perceived trustworthiness is positively related to purchase intention.

This hypothesis is based on the proposed relationship between the perceived trustworthiness of the spokes-character and the purchase intentions of the respondents.

Hypothesis 5: The video game character's perceived expertise is positively related to purchase intention.

This hypothesis is based on the proposed relationship between the perceived expertise of the spokes-character and the purchase intentions of the respondents.

Hypothesis 6: The perceived mutch-up between the video game character and the brand is positively related to purchase intention.

This hypothesis is based on the perceived level of congruence between the spokes-character and the brand and the affect which this congruence has on the purchase intentions of the respondents.

Hypothesis 7: There is a difference between the responses of males and females in relation to their purchase intentions.

This hypothesis is based on the expectation that the respondents of different genders will have different purchase intentions after being exposed to the fictitious advertisements used in this research.

Hypothesis 8: There is a difference between the responses of those respondents who play video games and those respondents who do not play video games in relation to their purchase intentions.

This hypothesis is based on the expectations that those respondents who do engage in playing video games will have a stronger connection to video game characters and in turn will have more positive attitudes towards the characters used in the advertisements. According to Pornpitakpan (2003b) stronger positive attitudes towards a message source will lead to a more positive intention to purchase.

3.5 Managerial Implications

Given the prevalent use of brand endorsements and the high costs involved with using endorsers in advertising, this source credibility model can be used to measure the appropriateness of the endorser before creating an advertising campaign and thus minimize the chance of making a costly mistake in using an inappropriate spokesperson for the brand (Pornpitakpan, 2003b). According to Ding, et al. (2011), between two and three billion dollars is spent annually on celebrity endorsement contracts in the United States alone.

The need for careful consideration arises from the fact that the credibility of celebrity and well as other kinds of endorsers are questionable (Patel, 2009). Consumers are becoming more savvy and they may distrust a brand endorser because the consumers know that the endorser is being paid for appearing alongside the brand (Patel, 2009). Patel (2009) believes that unless the endorser and the brand or product category are closely related then the power of that endorser's message is questionable.

3.6 Limitations of the Model

The Theoretical Model of Fictitious Human Spokes Characters has two specific limitations. The first is that the model does not include a component to measure the transfer of meanings from the endorser to the product and from the product to the consumer as was proposed by the Meaning Transfer Model. The second limitation is that the model does not include a component to measure the difference in responses between consumers when they perceive the endorsement message via the central route versus the peripheral route.

Future research should be directed at investigating the transfer of meaning from endorsers to brands and from brands to consumers. Future research should also investigation the difference in responses to brand endorsements by video game characters when they are perceived through the central route as opposed to the peripheral route.

3.7 Conclusion

The Theoretical Model of Fictitious Human Spokes Characters gives a comprehensive summary of the factors which can influence the effectiveness of a fictitious human spokes-character. The Theoretical Model of Fictitious Human Spokes Characters does this by relating the factors which affect perceived credibility, attractiveness and product match-up to the purchase intentions of consumers for the endorsed brand. The Theoretical Model of Fictitious Human Spokes Characters measures this effectiveness using specific scales related to the individual constructs.

The scales used for attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness come from Ohanian's (1990) work on the construction and validation of scales to measure a celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Since this initial testing the scales has been ratified and validated through several studies which have been conducted (Ohanian, 1991; Pornpitakpan, 2003a; Pornpitakpan, 2003b).

The scales were initially developed to measure the effectiveness of a celebrity endorser but Ohanian (1990) states that the above scales can be adapted to a variety of situations. Pornpitakpan (2003b) also states that this model and its related scales can be used for choosing non-celebrity endorsers and non-celebrity message sources from other contexts. For the purpose of this study these scales were used in part to measure the effectiveness of using a video game character as a brand endorser.

In the next chapter the Theoretical Model of Fictitious Human Spokes Characters was used as a basis for the design of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was used for the collection of

primary data form the sample group via a survey. Chapter 4 consists of a detailed description and discussion of the design and methodology for the research done in this study. The chapter gives a step by step breakdown of the design and procedures which were followed during this study. Chapter 4 gives a description of the sources of data which were used and the chapter also gives a detailed description of the sampling methods and procedures which were followed. The chapter gives a detailed description of the questionnaire design as well as the data collection and analysis procedures which were used during the survey. Lastly the chapter looks at the ethical considerations which were taken into account during the research process.

Chapter 4

Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three has discussed the model for this study and has provided a detailed discussion of each of the components included in the model of brand endorsements used in this study. This chapter presents the main methods and techniques that were applied to obtain the findings which are presented in the next chapter. Firstly the research design has been discussed; this is then followed by a discussion on the population, the sampling methods and the procedures which were used. Lastly, a conclusion is given for the research design and methodology.

4.2 Research Design

Research design may be defined as a framework for conducting the marketing research plan, which specifies the procedures necessary to obtain the information needed to solve the marketing problem (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). A research design serves as a guideline for conducting the study. Malhotra and Peterson (2006) suggest that a researcher needs to choose a design which will firstly ensure that the research is conducted in an efficient manner, and secondly will provide the appropriate information regarding the research. The researcher must decide, in addition, which research approach will be utilized to complete the study. For the purpose of this research the quantitative and qualitative research methods have been discussed separately and the chosen method has been identified.

4.2.1 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is defined as a form of research methodology that seeks to quantify the data collected and typically applies to some of statistical analysis (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Quantitative research seeks to quantify the data into a numeric form and generalize the results from the sample to the population of interest (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Quantitative research focuses on numbers rather than on words and attempts to develop and test hypotheses (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

Malhotra and Peterson (2006) have identified the following five characteristics which are associated with quantitative research:

Firstly is: causality. Quantitative research attempts to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between variables. Quantitative research endeavours to distinguish which variables are independent and which variables are dependent variables. Quantitative research then attempts to establish whether changes in the independent variable cause changes to occur in the dependent variable.

Secondly is: generalization. In quantitative research the findings which are discovered from the sample group can be generalized to the population which the sample is taken from. The reasons for this are that quantitative research is more objective than qualitative research and also quantitative research tends to use much larger sample groups that qualitative research.

Thirdly is: replication. A quantitative study should be replicable if the research process is clearly and accurately defined. This is because quantitative research is objective and the results are quantifiable. Also quantitative research is not affected by such things as interviewer bias or group think.

Fourthly is: a focus on individuals. In quantitative research the responses are collected from individual respondents and then the responses are analysed to form the overall results from the sample group. Quantitative research is not collected in groups like qualitative research often is; instead quantitative research is collected confidentially from individual respondents.

Lastly is: the research constructs. In quantitative research the constructs or the variables which are used are measured in numerical values. Quantitative research attributes quantifiable values to the responses which are collected so that the responses can be analysed through statistical measures.

4.2.2 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is an unstructured, exploratory research methodology, based on small samples that provide insights and understanding of the situation which has led to the research problem (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research focuses on words and observations rather than on numbers, it attempts to find a deeper understanding of the topic (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Qualitative research is based on smaller sample groups that are usually non-representative, and the data are analysed in a non-statistical manner (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Qualitative research is often a precursor to

quantitative. The insights uncovered during qualitative research are sometimes used to form hypotheses which can be tested using quantitative research (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

Malhotra and Peterson (2006) have identified the following four characteristics which are associated with qualitative research:

Firstly is: perspectives. In qualitative research researchers are interested mainly in understanding the issues being investigated from the perspectives of the participants. Qualitative research does not try to quantify the responses of the sample group and it does not try to analyse the responses through statistical techniques. Rather qualitative research attempts to reach a deeper understanding of the issues being investigated.

Secondly is: context. In qualitative research it is necessary to provide a detailed description and analysis of the environment and the context in which the research took place. The reason for this is that the context which surrounds the collection of qualitative research often has an impact on the responses which are collected from the sample group. The responses which are collected in qualitative research are subjective and the environment and context can have an effect on the subjectivity of the responses.

Thirdly is: process. In qualitative research it is necessary to examine interrelated events in order to understand how previous events and experiences affect the perspectives and attitudes of the participants. As mentioned previously this is because the responses of the participants are subjective and are not quantifiable.

Lastly is: generalization. The results from qualitative research may not be applicable to other situations due to the unique and unstructured manner of the research. As mentioned previously the responses from the participants rely heavily on the environment and the context in which the qualitative research is conducted.

After taking both research methods into consideration, it was decided that it was most appropriate to use the quantitative research method to conduct the research. The objective of this study was to investigate which characteristics of video game characters used as brand endorsers affect the purchase intentions of consumers exposed to the endorsement. Given the nature of this research, the use of quantitative research methods allowed the researcher to draw a large, representative sample and to use statistical measures and techniques to analyse the data.

4.3 Data Collection Design

According to Malhotra and Peterson (2006) marketing research is the systematic and objective identification, collection, analysis, dissemination, and use of data that is undertaken to improve the decision making related to a specific marketing problem. The researcher needs to take into account the type, source, nature and form of the information that is to be collected (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

The type of data refers to whether the data is quantitative or qualitative research. These two types of data have been defined above. The researcher used a self-administered questionnaire to collect quantitative data.

The source of data may be of a primary or secondary source (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Primary data is data which is collected first hand by the researcher specifically to address the research problem under study (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). For the purpose of this study primary data was collected through the use of qualitative questionnaires. Approximately 600 questionnaires were distributed to the sample, of which 493 were suitable for use in the analysis.

Secondary data are data which has been previously collected for some purpose other than the research problem at hand (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Secondary data can be collected more quickly and at a lower cost than the collection of primary data. Throughout the duration of this research study, the researcher collected data from numerous secondary research sources. The majority of the secondary research was collected from academic journals, but several academic textbooks were also used by the researcher. The majority of secondary research is discussed in the literature review under chapter 2.

The design of the data refers specifically to the time period over which the data was collected. There are two forms of designs; they are cross-sectional designs and longitudinal designs.

A Cross-sectional design is a type of research design which involves the one-time collection of information from a given research sample of a population (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). A cross-sectional study conducted when a researcher is interested in obtaining a picture of the marketplace at a single point in time (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Cross-sectional designs are far more commonly used than longitudinal designs; cross-sectional designs also cost less than longitudinal designs (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

Longitudinal design is a type of research design involving a fixed research sample of a specific population that is measured repeatedly on the same variables over a longer period of time (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). The research sample remains the same over time; this provides a series of pictures, which portrays both the current situation and the changes which are taking place in the market (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). A major advantage of longitudinal designs is the ability to detect any changes as a result of repeated measurements of the same variables on the same respondents over a specific time period (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

This research has used a cross-sectional design as it evaluated the perceptions of the students in the sample group at a single moment in time.

The form of the data refers to the way in which the data was collected. The data can be collected either overtly or non-overtly.

Overt data refers to data that was collected in a manner where the researcher has direct contact with the research subjects, usually through verbal communications (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Examples of such forms of data collection could be personal interviews or focus groups.

Conversely, non-overt data refers to data which has been collected from respondents where there is no direct contact with the research subject, the data is collected non-verbally (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Examples of such forms of data collection are through mail surveys, or observation methods.

The data collected for this research was collected non-overtly. The responses were collected non-verbally through the use of self-administered questionnaires.

4.4 Population

The population of people which this study is focused on is people between the ages of 18 to 35 in the area of Johannesburg city, South Africa. The reason for selecting this population is they make up the major portion of the youth population or young market (Bhatt, et al., 2012). Bhatt, et al. (2012), defines the young market as anyone between the ages of 13 and 35. According to Bhatt, et al. (2012), the young market is an extremely large and lucrative market of savvy consumers. These consumers are more likely to recall the information which is presented in advertisements, however they are less likely to be persuaded by that information presented (Bhatt, et al., 2012).

The reasons for selecting the research population of consumers between 18 and 35 are firstly, that they have a higher spending power than younger children as well as having a broader knowledge and understanding of consumer brands. Secondly, these consumers are above the age of consent so they do not need their parent's permission to partake in the survey. Thirdly, fiction is a preferred genre of this consumer segment and animated adverts strike a better chord among the youthful consumers (Bhatt, et al., 2012).

According to official statistics released by the city of Johannesburg, the population of Johannesburg is 3.2 million and of these individuals approximately 760 000 are between the

ages of 18 and 35 (Official website of the city of Johannesburg, 2014). This was the sample population used in this research.

4.5 Sample Selection

As mentioned in chapter 1 probability sampling is a sampling procedure in which each individual within a specified population has the same chance of being selected to be part of the sample group chosen for the research (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Nonprobability sampling is a sampling technique that relies on the judgement of the researcher instead of using chance selection procedures to select individuals for the sample group (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Nonprobability sampling was the technique best suited for the research design which was used.

Under this technique the sampling that was used was convenience sampling. Convenience sampling may be defined as a sample that is obtained based on the convenience and ease of access to the respondents within a certain population (Babi, et al., 2010). One major drawback to this sampling method is that there is no objective way to evaluate the precision of the results from the sample drawn (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

A sample was drawn from the population consisting of adults between the ages of 18 and 35 in the city of Johannesburg, South Africa. Convenience sampling was used because of time and monetary restraints.

4.5.1 Determining the Sample Size

As noted by Malhotra and Peterson (2006) determining the sample size involves both quantitative and qualitative considerations. The qualitative factors which the researcher should consider when determining the sample size are:

- The nature of the research
- The number of variables
- The nature of the analysis
- Sample sizes used in similar studies
- Resource constraints

As a general rule the more important the decision is, the more precise the information must be (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006) be (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006) this implies the need for larger samples. The need for greater accuracy must be weighed against the increase in cost that comes with the collection of (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

The quantitative considerations to determining sample size are based on statistical equations (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). In this approach, the level of precision is specified in advance. The statistical approach is based on the construction of confidence intervals around sample means or proportions (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

The sample size was determined through the use of Raosoft sample size calculator. Raosoft is statistical software used in the calculation of sample size. Raosoft takes into consideration four factors in determining sample size. These factors include the margin of error, the confidence level, the population and the response distribution. Using Raosoft sample size

calculator, with a margin of error of 5%, a confidence level of 95%, and a population of 760 000, the minimum recommended sample size was calculated to be 385 people.

The sample which was used in this study consisted of 493 adults between the ages of 18 and 35, living in the city of Johannesburg, South Africa.

4.6 Primary Data Collection Instrument

The researcher decided that the most appropriate primary data collection instrument for this research was a self-administered quantitative questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based on the theoretical model which was designed for this research. The questions were developed based on the research done by McGuire (1985), Ohanian (1990) and Kamins and Gupta (1994).

Questionnaires may be designed using unstructured or structured questions (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Unstructured questions are open-ended questions which the sample respondents are expected to answer in their own words (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Structured questions are closed-ended questions which provide the sample respondents with a set of response alternatives to choose from, they may be based on multiple-choice or scales (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

The researcher decided to use structured questionnaires based on numerical scales. The advantages of structured scale questions are that interviewer bias is reduced, and the responses to the questions are easy to code and analyse.

These questionnaires were distributed in two ways:

- In hard copy by the researcher to individuals at shopping centres around the city of Johannesburg.
- Electronically using a free online survey software called survey monkey. Individuals were invited to take part in the survey via social media websites.

A pilot test was run on this questionnaire, where 45 participants were asked to evaluate the questionnaire and to highlight any problems that the participants feel may exist with any part of the questionnaire or the adverts which were used. This is to ensure that the respondents have the ability to understand as well as to appropriately answer the questions.

4.6.1 Format of the Questionnaire

The fundamental design of the questionnaire consisted of three main sections. These three sections are as follows:

4.6.1.1 Section A: Biographical Details

The first section of the questionnaire consisted of demographic questions. These questions included such things as the respondents' age and gender. The purpose of section A was to gather the necessary biographical data to ensure that the sample respondents are in fact from the target research population. Secondly the data was used to establish whether relationships exist between the respondents' demographics and their responses to the questions in the following sections.

4.6.1.2 Section B: Advertisement

Section B of the questionnaire was used to evaluate the respondents opinions of the adverts used for the purpose of this research. It also investigated the respondent's prior experience with video games and the video game characters. Lastly this section investigated the respondent's intention to purchase the product after having seen the advert.

Some examples of questions which were included in the self-administered questionnaire are as follows:

On average how often do you play video games?

Do you recognize the character in the advertisement?

Do you think the advert is effective?

After seeing the advert would you be likely to look for the product at your local store?

4.6.1.3 Section C: Video Game Character

The final section of the questionnaire was used to evaluate the respondent's opinion about the video game character along the aspects of their attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness. These questions were used to evaluate the effectiveness of using video game characters as brand endorsers.

Some examples of these questions which were included in the self-administered questionnaire are as follows:

I feel that the video game character in the advert is attractive/ unattractive

I feel that the video game character in the advert is reliable/ unreliable

I feel that the video game character in the advert is sincere/ insincere

These questions where measured using a 7 point scale; with positive responses (attractive, reliable, and sincere) being measured as 7 and negative responses (unattractive, unreliable, and insincere) being measured as 1.

4.7 Data Processing and Analysing

Raw data is most often difficult to interpret and to establish relationships between variables, therefore it is most often necessary for the data to go through the process of editing and coding before it can be statistically analysed (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

4.7.1 Editing and Coding

Before raw data can be used in the research study it needs to be edited. Editing involves reviewing the questionnaires collected with the objective of increasing accuracy and precision (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). This process consists of screening the questionnaires to identify any incomplete, inconsistent or ambiguous responses (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). The researcher compared the questionnaire to all of the doubtful data to correct for any inappropriate responses which may have occurred when collecting the data.

Before the data collected can be analysed, the responses need to be coded. Coding is the process of assigning a code, which is usually a number, to each response question (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). The code includes an indication of the column position and the data record it will occupy (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Coding therefore allows for the creation

of inputs which can then be entered into databases and then analysed in a statistical manner (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

The edited and coded data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet and then imported into the statistical program. The statistical program was then used to analyse the data.

4.7.2 Data Analysis and Statistical Techniques

Before the coded data can have any significant meaning it needs to be analysed. The statistical program that was used for the analysis was SAS Enterprise Guide 4.2. The analysis of data can take the form of either inferential or descriptive statistics.

Descriptive statistics are designed to present the data in a form which is easy to interpret (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006) through the use of statistical summaries. The descriptive statistics which have been used in the next chapter include such measures as the frequency distribution of the respondents.

The chapter also includes two t-tests. The first is an analysis to determine if there is a statistical difference between the purchase intentions of the different gendered respondents. The second is an analysis to determine if there is a statistical difference between the purchase intentions of the individuals who have engaged with video games previously and those individuals that have not.

Inferential statistics are defined as those statistics which are used to make inferences about a population from the data collected from a sample of that population (Malhotra & Peterson,

2006). The inferential test which was used was a test for statistical significance. Statistical significance is the critical probability of choosing whether or not to reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternate hypothesis (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). This is tested by using a specific significance level; the significance level which was selected for this research was a level of 0.05. The test for statistical significance is done by comparing the p-value which was calculated to the significance level (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). In the case of this research any p-value calculated to be lower than the significance level of 0.05 was considered to have a statistically significant difference, and as such the null hypothesis would be rejected in favour of the alternate hypothesis.

Linear regression analysis was used to test the research models hypotheses. Simple linear regression was used to test for a positive relationship for each of the 6 hypotheses.

Simple linear regression may be defined as a statistical test in which the researcher wants to quantify a relationship between a response variable, the dependent variable, and a predictor variable, the independent variable (Montgomery & Peck, 1992). According to Montgomery and Peck (1992) simple linear regression may also be extended to cover the prediction or the estimation of a single dependent variable, the response variable, from a number of independent variables, also known as predictor variables.

For this research, in the case of the first six hypotheses, simple linear regression was used with the dependent or response variable being purchase intention, and the independent variable, or predictor variable being: attractiveness, likeability, familiarity, trustworthiness, expertise and product match-up respectively. For the seventh and eighth hypotheses, t-tests

were used with the dependent variable being purchase intention, and the predictor variables being the gender and engagement with video games respectively.

4.8 Reliability and Validity

According to Malhotra and Peterson (2006), the reliability and validity of test scores need to be established.

4.8.1 Reliability

The term reliability refers to the extent to which a scale produces consistent results if the measurements are taken repeatedly. In other words reliability refers to the extent to which measures taken from the scale are free from random errors (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Reliability is measured by repeatedly measuring the variables or constructs in question. The higher the association between the scores derived through this procedure, the more reliable the scale (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

Reliability is measured by repeatedly measuring the variables or constructs in question. The higher the association between the scores derived through this procedure, the more reliable the scale (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). This coefficient value varies from 0 to 1, and any value which is less than 0.6 is considered to indicate an unsatisfactory reliability for that specific construct (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

Below is a discussion of the Cronbach's Alphas that were calculated for each of the seven constructs of the scale which were tested.

4.8.2 Attractiveness Reliability

The attractiveness construct of the scale is calculated along five indicators, they are:

- Attractive – Unattractive
- Classy – Not Classy
- Beautiful – Ugly
- Elegant – Plain
- Sexy – Not Sexy

The results of the calculation were as follows:

Table 4.1 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for Each Variable in the Attractiveness Construct for the Pilot Study

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha	
Total	0.725
Cronbach Coefficient Alpha With deleted Variables	
Attractive	0.662
Classy	0.654
Beautiful	0.612
Elegant	0.787
Sexy	0.654

The calculated Cronbach's alpha for a source's attractiveness was calculated using the results of the pilot study to be: 0.725. This is above the 0.6 margin and indicates that the measurement of the source attractiveness construct is reliable.

4.8.3 Trustworthiness Reliability

The trustworthiness construct of the scale is calculated along five indicators, they are:

- Trustworthy – Untrustworthy
- Dependable – Undependable
- Honest – Dishonest
- Reliable – Unreliable
- Sincere – Insincere

The results of the calculation were as follows:

Table 4.2 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for Each Variable in the Trustworthiness Construct for the Pilot Study

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha	
Total	0.870
Cronbach Coefficient Alpha With deleted Variables	
Trustworthy	0.870
Dependable	0.819
Honest	0.843
Reliable	0.847
Sincere	0.846

The calculated Cronbach's alpha for a source's trustworthiness was calculated using the results of the pilot study to be: 0.87. This is above the 0.6 margin and indicates that the measurement of this variable is very reliable.

4.8.4 Expertise Reliability

The expertise construct of the scale is calculated along five indicators, they are:

- Expert – Non-expert
- Experienced – Inexperienced
- Knowledgeable – Unknowledgeable
- Qualified – Unqualified
- Skilled – Unskilled

The results of the calculation were as follows:

Table 4.3 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for Each Variable in the Expertise Construct for the Pilot Study

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha	
Total	0.924
Cronbach Coefficient Alpha With deleted Variables	
Expert	0.915
Experienced	0.889
Knowledgeable	0.930
Qualified	0.905
Skilled	0.894

The calculated Cronbach's alpha for a source's expertise was calculated using the results of the pilot study to be: 0.924. This is far above the 0.6 margin and indicates that the measurement of this variable is very reliable.

4.8.5 Likeability Reliability

The likeability construct of the scale is calculated along five indicators, they are:

- Likeable – Unlikable
- Pleasant – Unpleasant
- Nice – Nasty
- Affable – Unfriendly
- Amiable – Disagreeable

The results of the calculation were as follows:

Table 4.4 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for Each Variable in the Likeability Construct for the Pilot Study

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha	
Total	0.954
Cronbach Coefficient Alpha With deleted Variables	
Likeable	0.939
Pleasant	0.948
Nice	0.950
Affable	0.940
Amiable	0.940

The calculated Cronbach's alpha for a source's likeability was calculated using the results of the pilot study to be: 0.954. This is above the 0.6 margin and indicates that the measurement of this variable is very reliable.

4.8.6 Familiarity Reliability

The familiarity construct of the scale is calculated along four indicators, they are:

- Familiar – Unfamiliar
- Similar – Dissimilar
- Alike – Unalike
- Relatable – Unrelated

The results of the calculation were as follows:

Table 4.5 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for Each Variable in the Familiarity Construct for the Pilot Study

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha	
Total	0.932
Cronbach Coefficient Alpha With deleted Variables	
Familiar	0.893
Similar	0.921
Alike	0.926
Relatable	0.906

The calculated Cronbach's alpha for a source's familiarity was calculated using the results of the pilot study to be: 0.932. This is above the 0.6 margin and indicates that the measurement of this variable is very reliable.

4.8.7 Match-Up Reliability

The match-up construct of the scale is calculated along four indicators, they are:

- Match: That is perceived level of match between the spokes-character and the product being endorsed.
- Fit: That is perceived level of fit between the spokes-character and the product being endorsed.
- Compatible: That is perceived level of compatibility between the spokes-character and the product being endorsed.
- Consistent: That is perceived level of consistence between the spokes-character and the product being endorsed.

The results of the calculation were as follows:

Table 4.6 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for Each Variable in the Match-Up Construct for the Pilot Study

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha	
Total	0.944
Cronbach Coefficient Alpha With deleted Variables	
Good Fit	0.918
Good Match	0.944
Compatible	0.919
Consistent	0.927

The calculated Cronbach's alpha for a source's match-up was calculated using the results of the pilot study to be: 0.944. This is above the 0.6 margin and indicates that the measurement of this variable is very reliable.

4.8.8 Purchase Intention Reliability

The Purchase Intention construct of the scale is calculated along five indicators, they are:

- Consider buying the product
- Looking for more information about the product
- Looking for the product in store
- Inquiring about the product in store
- Likeliness of buying the product

The results of the calculation were as follows:

Table 4.7 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for Each Variable in the Purchase Intention Construct for the Pilot Study

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha	
Total	0.858
Cronbach Coefficient Alpha With deleted Variables	
Consider Buying	0.826
Look for Information	0.866
Look for the Product	0.791
Inquire about Product	0.812
Buy Product	0.843

The calculated Cronbach's alpha for the purchase intention of the sample was calculated using the results of the pilot study to be: 0.858. This is above the 0.6 margin and indicates that the measurement of this variable is very reliable

The results from the above seven statistical analyses provide evidence that the scale used for this research is reliable. The Cronbach's alphas for all of these constructs were again calculated using the full sample group in chapter 5.

4.8.9 Validity

The validity of the scale as defined by Malhotra and Peterson (2006) is the extent to which differences in the observed scale scores reflect the true differences among the indicators of the construct which is being measured. In other words validity relates to the extent to which the scale measures what it is supposed to measure (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). . If a scale if perfectly valid then it is also perfectly reliable. In this case neither random nor systematic error is present (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Thus if a measure is unreliable, it cannot be perfectly valid since there is at minimum some random error present.

For this research it is important to consider the content validity of the scale, also sometimes known as the face validity of the scale. Content validity is described as the subjective but systematic evaluation of the representativeness of the variable or construct which is of interest (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). In order for a scale to be content valid, it must address all dimensions of the variables of interest. This is a common sense evaluation of the scale (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

The objective of this study was to investigate which characteristics of video game characters used as brand endorsers affect the purchase intentions of consumers exposed to the endorsement. Therefore, the measuring instrument, being the questionnaire, should contain the theoretical background regarding the various elements of brand endorsements and the variables which measure the effectiveness of the message source. The questionnaire that is being used has been derived from previous research done by Pornpitakpan (2003a) on university students to determine the effectiveness of celebrity message sources. This study by Pornpitakpan (2003a) was done to validate the study that was done on the source-credibility model by Ohanian (1990). These previous studies contribute to the content validity of the questionnaire and this study.

The validity of the research scales was tested using factor analysis. This factor analysis is analysed in chapter 5.

4.9 Limitations of the research methodology

There are two specific limitations to the research methodology. The first limitation is that the sampling method used was not a probability sampling method, so the results may not be representative of the sample population.

The second limitation is that the survey was restricted to the population of people living in the city of Johannesburg. Therefore the results may not be generalizable to other population groups.

4.10 Ethical Considerations of the Research Project

The research topic dealt with the respondents' opinions, and opinions are often a personal matter. Not all individuals are willing to disclose their personal opinion on a specific matter. However, the purpose of this research was to investigate the sample group as a whole, and not on an individual basis. So the research was designed to investigate the opinions of the sample group as a collective and to keep the respondents' opinions confidential.

The respondents were not asked to indicate their names or student numbers on the questionnaire, in order to guarantee their anonymity. The respondents were not asked to indicate which advert the respondent chose when they participated in the questionnaire. This was done in order to ensure that the respondents answered the questionnaire as honestly as possible. Furthermore the cover letter which accompanied the questionnaire, assured the respondents that the information gathered will remain confidential and will not be distributed to third parties, but be used for research purposes only.

The data collected during the research process was stored in a secure location. Access to the data was limited to the researcher and the researcher's supervisor.

4.11 Conclusion

The research design and methodology have been outlined in this chapter. The main methods and procedures that were followed to collect and analyse the data for the research study were discussed. The focus areas covered in this chapter include the design of the research, the sampling procedure that was followed, and the data collection design. The chapter included

the discussion of the processing and analysing of the data which was collected. The chapter was concluded with the limitations of this research and suggestions for future research as well as the ethical considerations of the research project.

The primary data for this research was collected through the use of a self-administered questionnaire which was distributed to a sample of adults in the City of Johannesburg, South Africa. The sample size consisted of 493 respondents. The research was a quantitative study and the data was edited and coded. The reliability and validity of the study was also discussed.

Chapter five discusses the findings from this empirical investigation. The chapter includes a statistical analysis of the results found from the questionnaire which was distributed. The chapter ends off with an interpretation of the results and a conclusion for the analysis.

Chapter 5

Analysis and Interpretation of Results

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 presented the design of the research study and also the methodology followed to obtain the results which are presented in this chapter. This chapter discusses the findings from this empirical investigation.

Chapter 5 includes the statistical analyses of the results found from the questionnaires which were distributed. The chapter discusses the analysis and results of the tests for reliability of the constructs which were included in the model. Finally the chapter will discuss the use of linear regression models to test the hypotheses which were formulated for this research study.

5.2 Reliability

The term reliability refers to the extent to which a scale produces consistent results if the measurements are taken repeatedly. In other words reliability refers to the extent to which measures taken from the scale are free from random errors (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). Reliability is measured by repeatedly measuring the variables or constructs in question. The higher the association between the scores derived through this procedure, the more reliable the scale (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

The most common test for reliability in marketing studies is the use of a Cronbach's alpha calculation. A Cronbach's alpha may be defined as a measure of reliability that is the average of all possible split-half coefficients resulting from different splittings of the variable in question (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). This coefficient value varies from 0 to 1, and any value which is less than 0.6 is considered to indicate an unsatisfactory reliability for that specific construct (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006).

Below is a discussion of the Cronbach's Alphas that were calculated for each of the seven constructs of the scale which are being tested. The statistics were calculated using the responses of the 493 respondents of the sample group who participated in this study. The statistical analysis was completed using SAS Enterprise Guide.

5.2.1 Attractiveness Reliability

The attractiveness construct of the scale is calculated along five indicators, they are:

- Attractive – Unattractive
- Classy – Not Classy
- Beautiful – Ugly
- Elegant – Plain
- Sexy – Not Sexy

The results of the calculation were as follows:

Table 5.1 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for Each Variable in the Attractiveness Construct

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha	
Total	0.789
Cronbach Coefficient Alpha With deleted Variables	
Attractive	0.761
Classy	0.774
Beautiful	0.720
Elegant	0.765
Sexy	0.832

The calculated Cronbach's alpha for a source's attractiveness was calculated using the results of the pilot study to be: 0.789. This is above the 0.6 margin and indicates that the measurement of the source attractiveness construct is reliable. The table above also indicates that the reliability cannot be improved by removing any of the variables from the correlation equation.

The alpha calculated for the perceived attractiveness of the endorser for this data is comparable to the alphas which were calculated by Pornpitakpan (2003a) which was 0.8.

5.2.2 Trustworthiness Reliability

The trustworthiness construct of the scale is calculated along five indicators, they are:

- Trustworthy – Untrustworthy
- Dependable – Undependable
- Honest – Dishonest
- Reliable – Unreliable
- Sincere – Insincere

The results of the calculation were as follows:

Table 5.2 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for Each Variable in the Trustworthiness Construct

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha	
Total	0.904
Cronbach Coefficient Alpha With deleted Variables	
Trustworthy	0.900
Dependable	0.878
Honest	0.876
Reliable	0.875
Sincere	0.885

The calculated Cronbach's alpha for a source's trustworthiness was calculated using the results of the pilot study to be: 0.904. This is above the 0.6 margin and indicates that the measurement of this variable is very reliable. The table above also indicates that the reliability cannot be improved by removing any of the variables from the correlation equation.

The alpha calculated for the perceived trustworthiness of the endorser for this data is comparable to the alphas which were calculated by Pornpitakpan (2003a) which was 0.9.

5.2.3 Expertise Reliability

The expertise construct of the scale is calculated along five indicators, they are:

- Expert – Non-expert
- Experienced – Inexperienced
- Knowledgeable – Unknowledgeable
- Qualified – Unqualified
- Skilled – Unskilled

The results of the calculation were as follows:

Table 5.3 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for Each Variable in the Expertise Construct

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha	
Total	0.913
Cronbach Coefficient Alpha With deleted Variables	
Expert	0.907
Experienced	0.880
Knowledgeable	0.899
Qualified	0.894
Skilled	0.893

The calculated Cronbach's alpha for a source's expertise was calculated using the results of the pilot study to be: 0.913. This is far above the 0.6 margin and indicates that the measurement of this variable is very reliable. The table above also indicates that the reliability cannot be improved by removing any of the variables from the correlation equation.

The alpha calculated for the perceived expertise of the endorser for this data is comparable to the alphas which were calculated by Pornpitakpan (2003a) which was 0.9.

5.2.4 Likeability Reliability

The likeability construct of the scale is calculated along five indicators, they are:

- Likeable – Unlikable
- Pleasant – Unpleasant
- Nice – Nasty
- Affable – Unfriendly
- Amiable – Disagreeable

The results of the calculation were as follows:

Table 5.4 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for Each Variable in the Likeability Construct

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha	
Total	0.960
Cronbach Coefficient Alpha With deleted Variables	
Likeable	0.951
Pleasant	0.953
Nice	0.951
Affable	0.951
Amiable	0.950

The calculated Cronbach's alpha for a source's likeability was calculated using the results of the pilot study to be: 0.96. This is above the 0.6 margin and indicates that the measurement of this variable is very reliable.

5.2.5 Familiarity Reliability

The familiarity construct of the scale is calculated along four indicators, they are:

- Familiar – Unfamiliar
- Similar – Dissimilar
- Alike – Unalike
- Relatable – Unrelated

The results of the calculation were as follows:

Table 5.5 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for Each Variable in the Familiarity Construct

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha	
Total	0.947
Cronbach Coefficient Alpha With deleted Variables	
Familiar	0.934
Similar	0.932
Alike	0.930
Relatable	0.926

The calculated Cronbach's alpha for a source's familiarity was calculated using the results of the pilot study to be: 0.947. This is above the 0.6 margin and indicates that the measurement of this variable is very reliable.

5.2.6 Match-Up Reliability

The match-up construct of the scale is calculated along four indicators, they are:

- Match: That is perceived level of match between the spokes-character and the product being endorsed.
- Fit: That is perceived level of fit between the spokes-character and the product being endorsed.
- Compatible: That is perceived level of compatibility between the spokes-character and the product being endorsed.
- Consistent: That is perceived level of consistence between the spokes-character and the product being endorsed.

The results of the calculation were as follows:

Table 5.6 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for Each Variable in the Match-Up Construct

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha	
Total	0.944
Cronbach Coefficient Alpha With deleted Variables	
Good Fit	0.924
Good Match	0.932
Compatible	0.923
Consistent	0.923

The calculated Cronbach's alpha for a source's match-up was calculated using the results of the pilot study to be: 0.944. This is above the 0.6 margin and indicates that the measurement of this variable is very reliable.

5.2.7 Purchase Intention Reliability

The Purchase Intention construct of the scale is calculated along five indicators, they are:

- Consider buying the product
- Looking for more information about the product
- Looking for the product in store
- Inquiring about the product in store
- Likeliness of buying the product

The results of the calculation were as follows:

Table 5.7 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for Each Variable in the Purchase Intention Construct

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha	
Total	0.937
Cronbach Coefficient Alpha With deleted Variables	
Consider Buying	0.928
Look for Information	0.930
Look for the Product	0.917
Inquire about Product	0.918
Buy Product	0.920

The calculated Cronbach's alpha for the purchase intention of the sample was calculated using the results of the pilot study to be: 0.937. This is above the 0.6 margin and indicates that the measurement of this variable is very reliable. The table above also indicates that the reliability cannot be improved by removing any of the variables from the correlation equation.

The results from the above seven statistical analyses provide evidence that the scales used for this research are reliable. Below, in table 5.8, is a comparison between the alphas calculated for the pilot study and for the alphas calculated for the full sample size.

Table 5.8 Comparison of Cronbach's Alphas

	Pilot study	Research Study
Attractiveness	0.725	0.789
Trustworthiness	0.870	0.904
Expertise	0.924	0.913
Likeability	0.954	0.960
Familiarity	0.932	0.947
Match-Up	0.944	0.944
Purchase Intentions	0.858	0.937

From this table it is evident that there was a general improvement in the reliability of the questions from the pilot study to the full research sample. The only alpha that did not improve was that of the expertise construct, however this alpha remained very high and thus remained very reliable.

5.3 Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is related to descriptive statistics in that it also tries to summarize the data in fewer dimensions (Chatfield & Collins, 1988). However it is different in the sense that it has a formal model underlying the analysis, in terms of which the observed variables are related to the unobservable constructs or factors (Chatfield & Collins, 1988).

Below is the factor analysis run in SAS Enterprise Guide 4.2. The factor analysis has been run using the varimax rotation method. This method is in line with the research done

previously by Pornpitakpan (2003a) and Ohanian (1991) both of which used varimax rotation for their factor analysis.

Table 5.9 Factor Analysis Results

Varimax Rotated Factor Pattern						
	Factor 1	**Factor 2**	**Factor 3**	**Factor 4**	**Factor 5**	**Factor 6**
Attractive	0.61593	0.20889	0.46949	0.03444	-0.33530	0.24940
Classy	0.65991	0.35138	0.04322	0.05486	-0.26485	-0.05791
Beautiful	0.68768	0.29912	0.42607	0.11163	-0.09747	-0.01030
Elegant	0.63231	0.21568	0.27742	0.06896	-0.22916	-0.55916
Sexy	0.39766	0.09670	0.57960	0.18260	0.65357	0.03706
Sincere	0.72190	0.28535	-0.08451	-0.31954	0.15798	-0.12701
Trustworthy	0.61429	0.36965	0.22826	-0.37900	-0.12115	0.17788
Dependable	0.68895	0.49217	-0.10027	-0.18307	0.07218	0.14714
Honest	0.68050	0.34211	-0.06483	-0.47172	0.04510	0.03420
Reliable	0.69627	0.45190	-0.12474	-0.25629	0.17540	-0.16518
Expert	0.63738	0.44348	-0.14857	0.25420	-0.02925	0.26271
Experienced	0.69136	0.47948	-0.18428	0.29426	-0.02127	0.18067
Knowledgeable	0.72414	0.38335	-0.25123	0.07473	0.10307	-0.05470
Qualified	0.71754	0.41518	-0.12779	0.22801	0.00616	-0.10397
Skilled	0.66999	0.41979	-0.19768	0.33386	0.06982	-0.12422
GoodFitC4	0.84495	-0.35071	-0.03298	-0.00130	0.04189	0.01375
CompatibleC4	0.85467	-0.32831	-0.01597	0.00735	-0.01914	-0.01202
ConsistentC4	0.87118	-0.28082	0.00132	-0.02500	0.00646	0.01264
GoodMatchC4	0.83686	-0.30386	-0.08870	0.03184	-0.02026	0.05412
LikeableC5	0.85424	-0.33397	-0.00557	0.03422	0.00389	0.00155
PleasantC5	0.86215	-0.30258	-0.01537	0.00900	-0.01075	0.02767
NiceC5	0.87384	-0.29403	0.01174	-0.03218	0.01192	-0.02345
AffableC5	0.86445	-0.31486	-0.03937	0.01814	-0.02123	0.00282
AmiableC5	0.86960	-0.31836	-0.01076	-0.00353	0.00696	-0.01370
FamiliarC6	0.86621	-0.28095	-0.07567	0.02669	0.00714	0.05757
SimilarC6	0.84001	-0.35527	-0.02431	-0.03176	0.00888	0.00210
AlikeC6	0.85498	-0.31524	-0.03425	0.02176	0.00650	0.01462
RelatableC6	0.85774	-0.34078	0.01562	-0.01722	-0.02380	-0.01005

From the table above it is not immediately clear which variables fall under each of the 6 factors. Because of the low loadings displayed in the above factor analysis, individual factor analyses were run in order to analyse the constructs and their respective variables. These factor analyses are illustrated in the below tables.

Table 5.10 Factor analysis results for the Attractiveness Construct

Factor Pattern	
	Factor1
Attractive	0.79653
Classy	0.75678
Beautiful	0.87658
Elegant	0.77805
Sexy	0.55444

This factor analysis indicates that the variables making up the attractiveness construct all load under one factor with relatively high loadings above 0.7 accept for the sexiness variable which has a loading of 0.55. This result is comparable to the results found in the above reliability analysis using the Cronbach's Alpha of the data.

Table 5.11 Factor analysis results for the Trustworthiness Construct

Factor Pattern	
	Factor1
Trustworthy	0.78758
Dependable	0.87014
Honest	0.87355
Reliable	0.87903
Sincere	0.84785

This factor analysis indicates that the variables making up the trustworthiness construct all load under one factor with relatively high loadings above 0.7. The lowest loading is 0.78.

This result is comparable to the results found in the above reliability analysis using the Cronbach's Alpha of the data.

Table 5.12 Factor analysis results for the Expertise Construct

Factor Pattern	
	Factor1
Expert	0.81879
Experienced	0.91184
Knowledgeable	0.84790
Qualified	0.86591
Skilled	0.87200

This factor analysis indicates that the variables making up the expertise construct all load under one factor with relatively high loadings above 0.8. This result is comparable to the results found in the above reliability analysis using the Cronbach's Alpha of the data.

Table 5.13 Factor analysis results for the Purchase Intention Construct

Factor Pattern	
	Factor1
Consider Buying	0.87328
Look Info	0.86432
Look Product	0.91667
Inquire Product	0.91228
Buy Product	0.90579

This factor analysis indicates that the variables making up the purchase intention construct all load under one factor with relatively high loadings above 0.8. This result is comparable to the results found in the above reliability analysis using the Cronbach's Alpha of the data.

Table 5.14 Factor analysis results for the Match-Up Construct

Factor Pattern	
	Factor1
Good Fit	0.92920
Good Match	0.91340
Compatible	0.93240
Consistent	0.92684

This factor analysis indicates that the variables making up the expertise construct all load under one factor with relatively high loadings above 0.9. This result is comparable to the results found in the above reliability analysis using the Cronbach's Alpha of the data.

Table 5.15 Factor analysis results for the Expertise Construct

Factor Pattern	
	Factor1
Expert	0.93066
Experienced	0.92327
Knowledgeable	0.92969
Qualified	0.93057
Skilled	0.93451

This factor analysis indicates that the variables making up the expertise construct all load under one factor with relatively high loadings above 0.9. This result is comparable to the results found in the above reliability analysis using the Cronbach's Alpha of the data.

Table 5.16 Factor analysis results for the Expertise Construct

Factor Pattern	
	Factor1
Expert	0.92287
Experienced	0.92609
Knowledgeable	0.93012
Qualified	0.93786

This factor analysis indicates that the variables making up the expertise construct all load under one factor with relatively high loadings above 0.9. This result is comparable to the results found in the above reliability analysis using the Cronbach's Alpha of the data.

5.4 Descriptive Statistics

Calculating the averages, the frequency distributions and the percentage distributions of the collected data are the most common methods of summarizing the data (Babi, et al., 2010).

5.4.1 Gender and Purchase Intentions

Table 5.1 illustrates the frequencies of the gender of the respondents to the questionnaire, the total frequencies of those respondents who do play video games and those who do not play video games respectively, and also it illustrates the difference between genders and those who do and do not play video games.

Table 5.17 Gender of Respondents and Frequency of Video Game Players

Gender		**Play Video Games**	
	Frequency	**Yes**	**No**
Males	216	183	33
Females	277	123	154
Total	493	306	187

This table illustrates that more respondents play video games than do not play video games. There were 306 respondents who play video games, and of these respondents 123 where female. This means that approximately 40% of the individuals who play video games are female, and inversely 60% are males. This observation is comparable to the study completed by Jackson (2011) as discussed in the literature review, in chapter 2.

It was unclear from previous research studies whether brand endorsements were more effective on male or female consumers' purchase intentions. In order to investigate whether there is a difference between males and females purchase intentions after being exposed to the advertisements a two sample t-test was run. The t-test is illustrated in table 5.18.

The null hypothesis ($H0^7$) is: there is no difference between the responses of males and females in relation to their purchase intentions.

The alternate hypothesis (H7) is: there is a difference between the responses of males and females in relation to their purchase intentions.

Table 5.18 t-Test for the Difference Between Purchase Intentions for Respondents of Different Genders

T-Test on Gender	P Value
Pooled Method	0.0004
Satterwaite Method	0.0005
Equality of Variances	0.6682

As illustrated the P value of the equality of variances is 0.66, this is not significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the pooled variances were used. The P value for the pooled method is 0.0004; this is significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore we reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternate hypothesis.

What this means is that there is a significant differences between the purchase intentions of males and females after they have been exposed to the adverts used in this research. Therefore it can be concluded that this form of brand endorsements is not equally effective for both males and females.

5.4.2 Engagement with Video Games and Purchase Intentions

As discussed earlier it was suggested by Avery, *et al* (2006) that using video game characters as brand endorsers is not effective for only those consumers who play games only but also for those consumers who do not play video games. However because there is a lack of research in this area it was decided by the researcher to investigate the effect which the respondent's engagement with video games has on the respondent's intentions to purchase the brand after they have been exposed to the advertisement.

Respondents were separated into two groups according to the respondent's engagement with video games. The first group are those respondents who do play video games and the second group are those respondents which do not play video games. As illustrated in table 5.1, there were 306 respondents which play video games, and there were 187 respondents which did not play video games.

In order to investigate whether there is a difference between males and females purchase intentions after being exposed to the advertisements a two sample t-test was run. The t-test is illustrated in table 5.19.

The null hypothesis ($H0^8$) is: there is no difference between the responses of those respondents which play video games and those respondents which do not play video games in relation to their purchase intentions.

The alternate hypothesis (H8) is: there is a difference between the responses of those respondents which play video games and those respondents which do not play video games in relation to their purchase intentions.

Table 5.19 t-Test for the Difference Between Purchase Intentions for Respondents with Different Engagement in Video Games

T-Test on Engagement	P Value
Pooled Method	<0.0001
Satterwaite Method	<0.0001
Equality of Variances	0.0271

As illustrated the P value of the equality of variances is 0.02, this is significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the Satterwaite variances were used. The P value for the Satterwaite method is <0.0001; this is very significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore we reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternate hypothesis.

Thus it can be concluded that the purchase intentions of the respondents differ depending on the respondents' engagement with video games. What this means is that those respondents who play video games and those respondents who do not play video games differ in their intentions to purchase the brand which is being endorsed after being exposed to the advertisement.

5.5 Linear Regression Analysis

The most appropriate statistical technique for testing the above research hypotheses is Linear Regression Analysis. This regression method examines data with respect to a linear model. This method examines the various variables involved and determines their relation and effect on one another (Babi, et al., 2010). The level of significance which was chosen for this research was the 0.05 level.

5.5.1 Attractiveness and Purchase Intention

The first linear regression analysis is testing the relationship between the perceived attractiveness of the video game character and the purchase intentions of consumers. Below are the null and alternate hypotheses.

The null hypothesis ($H0^1$) is: The video game character's perceived attractiveness is not significantly related to purchase intention

The alturnate hypothesis (H1) is: The video game character's perceived attractiveness is positively related to purchase intention.

Table 5.20 illustrates the results of the linear regression analysis test for the attractiveness of the game character.

Table 5.20 Linear regression for the Perceived Attractiveness of the Video Game Character

Analysis of Variance					
Source	**DF**	**Sum of Squares**	**Mean Squares**	**F Value**	**Pr > F**
Model	1	394.484	394.484	314.64	<0.0001
Error	491	615.597	1.254		
Corrected total	492	1010.081			
		Coeff Var	**Root MSE**	**Dependent Mean**	**R-Square**
		22.123	1.120	5.061	0.391
Parameter Estimates					
Variable	**DF**	**Parameter Estimate**	**Standard Error**	**t Value**	**Pr > F**
Intercept	1	0.524	0.261	2.01	0.045
Attractiveness	1	0.800	0.045	17.74	<0.0001

The P value for the model test is <0.0001, this is lower than the significance level (α) of 0.05. This means that the model is significant and a good fit for the data.

The P value of the intercept is 0.045; this is significant at the 0.05 level of significance. This means that the intercept is significant.

The P value for the attractiveness variable is <0.0001 this is significant at the 0.05 significance level. Therefore the researcher rejects the null hypothesis in favour of the

alternate hypothesis which states that the game characters perceived attractiveness will positively influence the purchase intentions of consumers. So the perceived attractiveness of the video game character is significantly related to the purchase intentions of consumers. This result is supported by the research which was previously done by Pornpitakpan (2003b) and Ohanian (1991); which found that the perceived attractiveness of the brand endorser has a positive relationship with the purchase intentions of consumers.

5.5.2 Likeability and Purchase Intention

The second linear regression analysis is testing the relationship between the perceived likeability of the video game character and the purchase intentions of consumers. Below are the null and alternate hypotheses.

The null hypothesis ($H0^2$) is: The video game character's perceived likeability is not significantly related to purchase intention

The alturnate hypothesis (H2) is: The video game character's perceived likeability is positively related to purchase intention

Table 5.21 illustrates the results of the linear regression analysis test for the likeability of the game character.

Table 5.21 Linear regression for the Perceived Likeability of the Video Game Character

Analysis of Variance					
Source	**DF**	**Sum of Squares**	**Mean Squares**	**F Value**	**Pr > F**
Model	1	848.896	848.896	2585.90	<0.0001
Error	491	161.185	0.328		
Corrected total	492	1010.081			
		Coeff Var	**Root MSE**	**Dependent Mean**	**R-Square**
		11.302	0.573	5.061	0.840
Parameter Estimates					
Variable	**DF**	**Parameter Estimate**	**Standard Error**	**t Value**	**Pr > F**
Intercept	1	0.039	0.102	0.39	0.69
Likeability	1	0.973	0.019	50.85	<0.0001

The P value for the model test is <0.0001, this is lower than the significance level (α) of 0.05. This means that the model is significant and a good fit for the data.

The P value of the intercept is 0.69; this is not significant at either the 0.05 or 0.01 levels of significance. This means that the intercept is not significant.

The P value for the likeability variable is <0.0001 this is significant at the 0.05 significance level. Therefore the researcher rejects the null hypothesis in favour of the alternate hypothesis which states that the game characters perceived likeability will positively influence the

purchase intentions of consumers. So the perceived likeability of the video game character is significantly related to the purchase intentions of consumers. This result is supported by the research which was previously done by Cacioppo, et al (1983); which found that the perceived likeability of the brand endorser has a positive relationship with the purchase intentions of consumers.

5.5.3 Familiarity and Purchase Intention

The second linear regression analysis is testing the relationship between the perceived familiarity of the video game character and the purchase intentions of consumers. Below are the null and alternate hypotheses.

The null hypothesis ($H0^3$) is: The video game character's perceived familiarity is not significantly related to purchase intention

The alturnate hypothesis (H3) is: The video game character's perceived familiarity is positively related to purchase intention

Table 5.22 illustrates the results of the linear regression analysis test for the familiarity of the game character.

Table 5.22 Linear regression for the Perceived Familiarity of the Video Game Character

Analysis of Variance					
Source	**DF**	**Sum of Squares**	**Mean Squares**	**F Value**	**Pr > F**
Model	1	849.618	849.618	2599.74	<0.0001
Error	491	160.463	0.326		
Corrected total	492	1010.081			
		Coeff Var	**Root MSE**	**Dependent Mean**	**R-Square**
		11.294	0.571	5.061	0.841

Parameter Estimates					
Variable	**DF**	**Parameter Estimate**	**Standard Error**	**t Value**	**Pr > F**
Intercept	1	-0.028	0.103	-0.27	0.785
Familiarity	1	0.986	0.019	50.99	<0.0001

The P value for the model test is <0.0001, this is lower than the significance level (α) of 0.05. This means that the model is significant and a good fit for the data.

The P value of the intercept is 0.785; this is not significant at either the 0.05 or 0.01 levels of significance. This means that the intercept is not significant.

The P value for the familiarity variable is <0.0001 this is significant at the 0.05 significance level. Therefore the researcher rejects the null hypothesis in favour of the alternate hypothesis

which states that the game characters perceived familiarity will positively influence the purchase intentions of consumers. So the perceived familiarity of the video game character is significantly related to the purchase intentions of consumers. This result is supported by the research which was previously done by Alijosiene, et al (2007); which found that the perceived familiarity of the brand endorser has a positive relationship with the purchase intentions of consumers.

5.5.4 Trustworthiness and Purchase Intention

The fourth linear regression analysis is testing the relationship between the perceived trustworthiness of the video game character and the purchase intentions of consumers. Below are the null and alternate hypotheses.

The null hypothesis ($H0^4$) is: The video game character's perceived trustworthiness is not significantly related to purchase intention

The alturnate hypothesis (H4) is: The video game character's perceived trustworthiness is positively related to purchase intention

Table 5.23 illustrates the results of the linear regression analysis test for the trustworthiness of the game character.

Table 5.23 Linear regression for the Perceived Trustworthiness of the Video Game Character

Analysis of Variance					
Source	**DF**	**Sum of Squares**	**Mean Squares**	**F Value**	**Pr > F**
Model	1	393.884	393.884	313.86	<0.0001
Error	491	616.197	1.255		
Corrected total	492	1010.081			
		Coeff Var	**Root MSE**	**Dependent Mean**	**R-Square**
		22.134	1.120	5.061	0.390
Parameter Estimates					
Variable	**DF**	**Parameter Estimate**	**Standard Error**	**t Value**	**Pr > F**
Intercept	1	1.470	0.209	7.04	<0.0001
Trustworthiness	1	0.703	0.039	17.72	<0.0001

The P value for the model test is <0.0001, this is lower than the significance level (α) of 0.05. This means that the model is significant and a good fit for the data.

The P value of the intercept is <0.0001; this is significant at both the 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. This means that the intercept is significant.

The P value for the trustworthiness variable is <0.0001 this is significant at the 0.05 significance level. Therefore the researcher rejects the null hypothesis in favour of the

alternate hypothesis which states that the game characters perceived trustworthiness will positively influence the purchase intentions of consumers. So the perceived trustworthiness of the video game character is significantly related to the purchase intentions of consumers. This result is supported by the research which was previously done by Pornpitakpan (2003b) and Ohanian (1991); which found that the perceived trustworthiness of the brand endorser has a positive relationship with the purchase intentions of consumers.

5.5.5 Expertise and Purchase Intention

The fifth linear regression analysis is testing the relationship between the perceived expertise of the video game character and the purchase intentions of consumers. Below are the null and alternate hypotheses.

The null hypothesis ($H0^5$) is: The video game character's perceived expertise is not significantly related to purchase intention

The alturnate hypothesis (H5) is: The video game character's perceived expertise is positively related to purchase intention

Table 5.24 illustrates the results of the linear regression analysis test for the expertise of the game character.

Table 5.24 Linear regression for the Perceived Expertise of the Video Game Character

Analysis of Variance					
Source	**DF**	**Sum of Squares**	**Mean Squares**	**F Value**	**Pr > F**
Model	1	340.766	340.766	249.98	<0.0001
Error	491	669.315	1.363		
Corrected total	492	1010.081			
		Coeff Var	**Root MSE**	**Dependent Mean**	**R-Square**
		23.068	1.168	5.061	0.337
Parameter Estimates					
Variable	**DF**	**Parameter Estimate**	**Standard Error**	**t Value**	**Pr > F**
Intercept	1	1.287	0.244	5.27	<0.0001
Expertise	1	0.672	0.042	15.81	<0.0001

The P value for the model test is <0.0001, this is lower than the significance level (α) of 0.05. This means that the model is significant and a good fit for the data.

The P value of the intercept is <0.0001; this is significant at both the 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. This means that the intercept is significant.

The P value for the expertise variable is <0.0001 this is significant at the 0.05 significance level. Therefore the researcher rejects the null hypothesis in favour of the alternate hypothesis which states that the game characters perceived expertise will positively influence the

purchase intentions of consumers. So the perceived expertise of the video game character is significantly related to the purchase intentions of consumers. This result is supported by the research which was previously done by Pornpitakpan (2003a) and Ohanian (1991); which found that the perceived expertise of the brand endorser has a positive relationship with the purchase intentions of consumers.

5.5.6 Match-Up and Purchase Intention

The second linear regression analysis is testing the relationship between the perceived match-up between the video game character and the brand and the purchase intentions of consumers. Below are the null and alternate hypotheses.

The null hypothesis ($H0^6$) is: The perceived match-up between the video game character and the brand is not significantly related to purchase intention

The alturnate hypothesis (H6) is: The perceived match-up between the video game character and the brand is positively related to purchase intention

Table 5.25 illustrates the results of the linear regression analysis test for the match-up between the video game character and the brand.

Table 5.25 Linear regression for the Perceived Match-Up Between the Video Game Character and the Brand

Analysis of Variance					
Source	**DF**	**Sum of Squares**	**Mean Squares**	**F Value**	**Pr > F**
Model	1	838.311	838.311	2396.29	<0.0001
Error	491	171.770	0.349		
Corrected total	492	1010.081			
		Coeff Var	**Root MSE**	**Dependent Mean**	**R-Square**
		11.686	0.591	5.061	0.829
Parameter Estimates					
Variable	**DF**	**Parameter Estimate**	**Standard Error**	**t Value**	**Pr > F**
Intercept	1	-0.035	0.102	-0.33	0.74
Match-Up	1	0.995	0.020	48.95	<0.0001

The P value for the model test is <0.0001, this is lower than the significance level (α) of 0.05. This means that the model is significant and a good fit for the data.

The P value of the intercept is 0.74; this is not significant at either the 0.05 or 0.01 levels of significance. This means that the intercept is not significant.

The P value for the match-up variable is <0.0001 this is significant at the 0.05 significance level. Therefore the researcher rejects the null hypothesis in favour of the alternate hypothesis

which states that the game characters perceived match-up between the video game character and the brand will positively influence the purchase intentions of consumers. So the perceived match-up between the video game character and the brand is significantly related to the purchase intentions of consumers. This result is supported by the research which was previously done by Ding, et al (2011); which found that the perceived match-up between the video game character and the brand has a positive relationship with the purchase intentions of consumers.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter included multiple tests for reliability. These showed that all of the variables which were being tested were reliable and they ranged from 0.78 to 0.96 which is above both the cut off points of 0.6 and 0.7 depending on which secondary research source you are following.

After the reliability of the variables were proven then each of the hypotheses, which were discussed in detail above, were tested using linear regression analysis.

The six linear regression analyses which were calculated and analysed in this research prove that video game characters who are perceived as either attractive, likeable, familiar, trustworthy, experts, or a good match with the endorsed brand will positively affect the purchase intentions of consumers, when the consumers are exposed to an advert in which the video game character is endorsing a brand or product. This is the same effect which an ordinary human celebrity has on consumers when the celebrity endorses a product or brand.

The above analyses show that the following relationships were significant: the relationship between the perceived attractiveness of the video game character and the purchase intentions of consumers, the relationship between the perceived trustworthiness of the video game character and the purchase intentions of consumers, the relationship between the perceived likeability of the video game character and the purchase intentions of consumers, , the relationship between the perceived familiarity of the video game character and the purchase intentions of consumers the relationship between the perceived expertise of the video game character and the purchase intentions of consumers, and the relationship between the perceived match-up between the video game character and the brand and the purchase intentions of consumers.

From these conclusive tests the researcher can answer the research question: is it plausible to use a video game character as a brand endorser in place of an ordinary human celebrity endorser, to positively influence the purchase intentions of consumers. The answer is: yes it is plausible to use a video game character as a brand endorser in place of an ordinary human celebrity endorser.

This means that marketers may effectively use a video game character as a brand endorser, if that character is perceived as attractive, trustworthy, likeable, familiar, an expert, or closely matched with the endorsed brand, by the target consumer audience.

The next chapter, chapter 6, will include a summary of the research and the research findings. Chapter 6 will give a list of managerial implications which were discovered through this research and the chapter will also list the limitations of this research and suggestions for

future research endeavours. Lastly chapter 6 will give a final conclusion to this research paper.

Chapter 6

Main Findings, Recommendations and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

Chapter five discussed the descriptive statistics collected during the research study. It also discussed the analysis and results of the statistical data which were collected. The chapter then discussed the linear regression tests which were run to investigate the research hypotheses.

This chapter discusses the main findings of this research, as well as limitations of this research. This chapter summarizes the results of this research paper and it outlines the management implications of the findings. The chapter also discusses recommendations for marketers as well as possibilities for future research. Lastly this chapter will give a conclusion to this dissertation.

6.2 Main Findings

This research explored the use of video game characters as brand endorsers in advertisements. The research looked at the impact which the adverts had on the purchase intentions of the sample group.

The research explored eight main constructs and their effect on the purchase intentions of the sample group. The first six constructs dealt with the characteristics of the video game

characters which were used in the advertisements. The last two constructs were related to the characteristics of the individuals within the sample group.

The research's first six constructs focus on the video game characters' perceived attractiveness, likeability, familiarity, trustworthiness, expertise and match up with the endorsed product and the effects which these constructs had on the purchase intentions of consumers. The last two constructs investigated the difference in the purchase intentions of respondents of different genders as well as the difference in the purchase intentions of respondents with different past exposure to video games.

The first finding was that the video game character's perceived attractiveness will positively influence the purchase intentions of consumers.

Essentially what this means is that, when using a video game character as a brand endorser, if consumers perceive the character as attractive then this will positively influence those consumers' intentions to purchase the brand which is being endorsed.

The second finding was that the video game character's perceived likeability will positively influence the purchase intentions of consumers.

What this means is that, when using a video game character as a brand endorser, if consumers perceive the character as likeable then this will positively influence those consumers' intentions to purchase the brand which is being endorsed.

The third finding was that the video game character's perceived familiarity will positively influence the purchase intentions of consumers.

In essence, what this means is that, when using a video game character as a brand endorser, if consumers perceive the character as being familiar to the respondent then this will positively influence those consumers' intentions to purchase the brand.

The fourth finding was that the video game character's perceived trustworthiness will positively influence the purchase intentions of consumers.

What this means is that, when using a video game character as a brand endorser, if consumers perceive the character to be trustworthy then this will positively influence those consumers' intentions to purchase the brand which is being endorsed.

The fifth finding was that the video game character's perceived expertise will positively influence the purchase intentions of consumers.

In essence, what this means is that, when using a video game character as a brand endorser, if consumers perceive the character to be an expert in relation to the brand which is being endorsed then this will positively influence those consumers' intentions to purchase the brand.

The sixth finding was that if the video game character is perceived to match well with the product or brand being endorsed then it will positively influence the purchase intentions of consumers.

What this means is that, when using a video game character as a brand endorser, if consumers perceive the character as being a good match with the product which is being endorsed then this will positively influence those consumers' intentions to purchase the brand.

The seventh finding was that there was a significant difference between respondents of different genders when it came to their purchase intentions.

What this means essentially is that the advertising strategy of using video game characters as brand endorsers is not equally effective for targeting male consumers as compared to female consumers. So video game characters should be used with caution when targeting both male and female consumers. Further research should be done into the target audience to see what their reaction to the video game character will be.

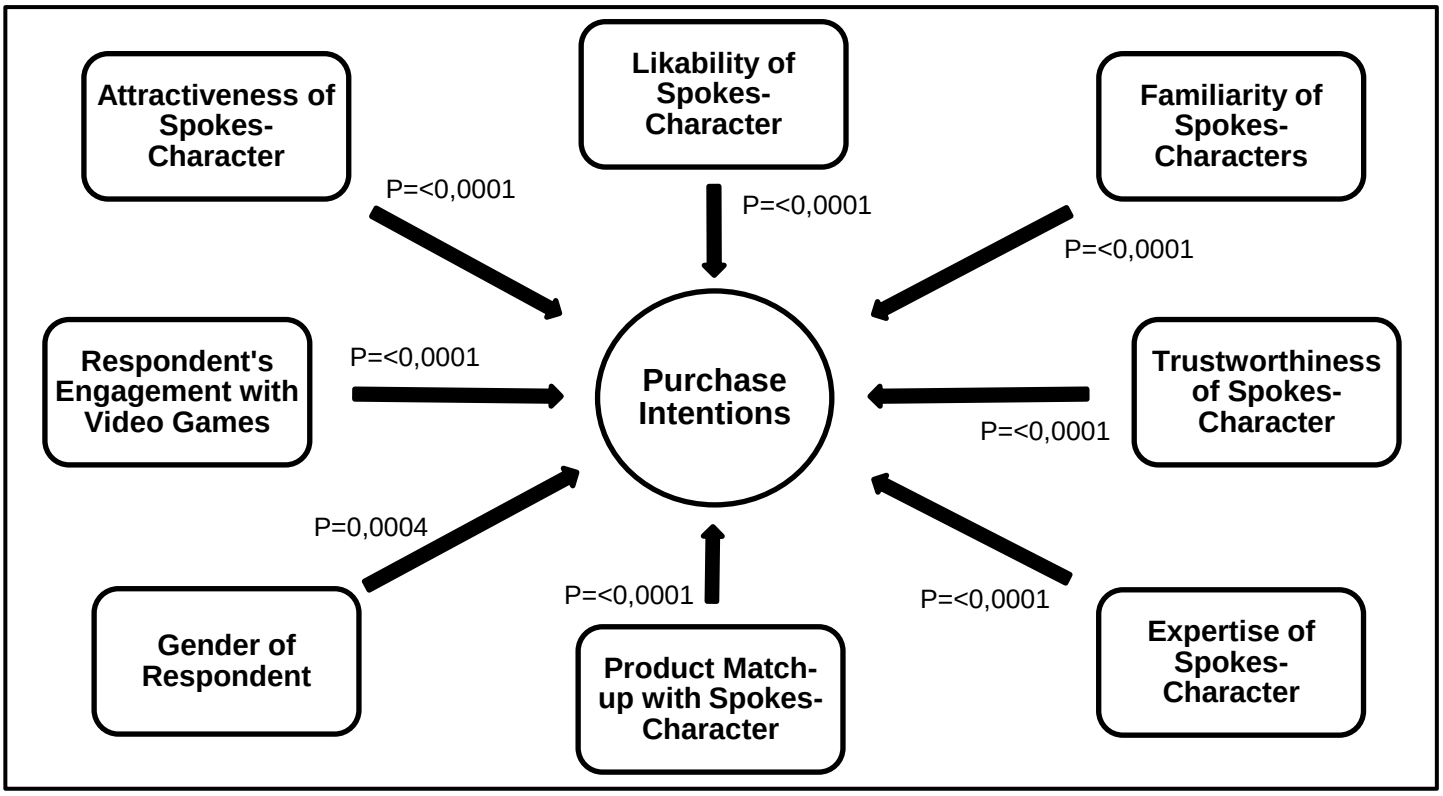
The final finding was that there was a significant difference between respondents who play video games and respondents who do not play video games when it comes to their purchase intentions.

What this means is that this endorsement strategy is more effective on some consumer segments than others. It predicts that this brand endorsement strategy will be more effective for targeting those consumers who have played video games in the past over those consumes that have not engaged with video games previously.

These afore-mentioned results have been represented graphically on the revised model of fictitious human spokes characters below. The constructs tested in the model have all been

demonstrated to have significant relationships with the purchase intentions of the respondents after they have been exposed to the advertisement. The revised model is illustrated below in figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 The Revised Model of Fictitious Human Spokes Characters



Source: Adapted from McGuire (1985), Ohanian (1990) and Kamins and Gupta (1994)

6.3 Managerial Implications and Recommendations

The main implication for marketing managers is that video game characters can be used successfully to endorse brands or products in order to improve the purchase intentions of consumers under certain circumstances. These circumstances are that the video game character is perceived as: being attractive in the minds of the target audience, being likeable and familiar to the target audience, being perceived as a trustworthy spokesperson, an expert

in relation to the product and being perceived as fitting well with the product which is being endorsed.

It can be recommended that marketers invest time in deciding whether or not the brand will be able to use a video game character in place of a celebrity to endorse the brand's products. This is because the use of video game characters has been shown in this research to positively affect consumers purchase intentions, in the same way that ordinary celebrities do, but they also have several benefits which reduce the risks of using a brand endorser which are normally associated with the use of ordinary celebrities.

It can also be recommended that video game companies seek opportunities to create partnerships with marketers to use their characters as brand endorsers. The reason for this is that these kinds of partnerships have been shown to be beneficial to both partners in the past according to Avery, et al (2006), as discussed in the literature review.

It was also shown, in table 5.18, that there was a significant difference in the purchase intentions of respondents who were of different genders. The implication of this is that this form of endorsement is not equally effective for targeting both male and female consumers. Therefore marketers who wish to employ this form of endorsement need to do so with care and need to use the gender of their target market as a guide.

It was shown in table 5.19 that there was a significant difference in the purchase intentions of consumers who play video games as opposed to those consumers who do not play video games, after they have been exposed to the advertisement. The implication here is that if marketers have information suggesting there is an opportunity to expand their brand into

market segments where there are many consumers who engage in video games then this strategy of using video game characters as brand endorsers is a powerful marketing tool to attract these consumers to the brand.

This implication is important because of the size and rapid growth of the video game industry on a global scale. The video game market is the fastest growing entertainment industry in the world (Caperton, 2012; Whitford, 2012; Jackson, 2011). This research found that 62% of the respondents engaged in video games as opposed to 38% that did not play any form of video games. This would suggest that there is a great opportunity for marketers to target new market segments through the use of video game characters as brand endorsers (Lamothe, 2012).

This implication is supported by the research which was conducted by Avery, *et al* (2006) which suggested that the video game industry is the largest entertainment industry globally. Also gamers, or in other words those consumers that play video games, represent a huge untapped market. Jones, *et al* (2008) states that more than 50% of adults in first world countries play video games of some kind. The gaming industry in South Africa is not as well developed as those in first world countries, but there is rapid growth within the South African gaming industry and this in turn is growing new opportunities for advertisers and marketers (Lamothe, 2012).

6.4 Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research

This present research has several minor limitations; the recognition of these should help to refine future research efforts. In regards to the questionnaire and the model used in this

research the selection of the constructs which were tested in this research were motivated by previous theoretical work; the work done by McGuire (1985), Ohanian (1990 and 1991),Kamins and Gupta (1994) and Pornpitakpan (2003a and 2003b). Therefore it is possible that this research, as the previous research before it, does not take into account all possible dimensions for the scale which may be able to improve its reliability and validity. As further research continues in this area, this existing scale may be expanded and modified.

The first opportunity for future research would be to investigate any other constructs which may have a mediating effect on the model which was used. Examples of such a construct would be the meaning transfer construct. For instance future research can be done on if meanings can be transferred from the video game character to the brand and from the brand to consumers, what kinds of meanings can be transferred this way, and what affect the transfer of meanings has on the purchase intentions of consumers.

This research has tried to remove as much bias as possible by using numerous video game characters which may be perceived to fit with the products which are being endorsed and which would be widely known by individuals both with and without previous exposure to the video games in which they appear. Future research may be done to investigate the effect of the popularity of a video game character on the purchase intentions of consumers. For instance the researcher could test the difference in reactions to a well-known and well-liked character against the reactions to a character which is not as well-known or well-liked.

This study was also limited by the time and monetary constraints which were in place. Due to these limitations the study was done using non-probability sampling methods. The use of non-probability sampling means that the results of this research are limited in terms of

generalizability to other populations. Future research in this area may be done using probability sampling to solve this problem of generalizability.

Future research should also examine the impact of consumer involvement as well as confidence in the product as mediating variables in the source-credibility research model. This research was done under conditions of low-involvement, where-as future research may be done under conditions of high-involvement. Future research can also be done to investigate the differences of using high-involvement versus low-involvement products and how these differences may affect the purchasing intentions of the target population.

In the future researchers could also conduct comparative study between video game characters and ordinary human celebrities. The research could compare the perceived characteristics of the celebrity and the game characters and investigate if there are differences in the affects these perceptions have on the consumers purchase intentions.

Future research could also focus on constructs which are not discussed in this research such as the aspirational aspect of the endorser. Essentially this construct would refer to the desire of consumers to be like the endorser or to share the same characteristics which they perceive the endorser to have. This construct may also be related to the meaning transfer construct described earlier.

Future research could investigate which target markets are most suitable for this form of endorsements and also which kind of products are best suitable for being endorsed in this way. There could be a different response when high involvement products are used as opposed to low involvement products. Target markets may be very different for different

brands so it would be beneficial to have a more extensive study on which consumers this form of endorsement is more effective on.

There also remains the possibility that response bias might affect the evaluation of the video game characters' effectiveness. In an ideal situation there should be a longer delay between the observing of the advertisements used in the research and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the endorsement to minimize the response carryover effects.

The research model could also be applied to populations from other geographic locations to see if there is a difference in responses. Researchers could compare the findings from sample populations from 1st world and 3rd world countries to see if there are any major differences.

Lastly future research could examine the memorability and top of mind awareness of the adverts by examining the recall of the advertisement over different periods of time. This could also be compared to the recall for advertisements which feature traditional celebrity endorsers.

6.5 Conclusion

The aim of this research paper was to investigate if it is plausible to use a video game character in place of a celebrity endorser in order to affect the purchase intentions of consumers. From the findings of the statistical analysis of the data collected, we can conclude that it is possible to use a video game character in place of a celebrity to endorse a brand.

This research found that video game characters, which are perceived by consumers to be attractive, likeable, familiar to the respondent, trustworthy, experts in relation to the product being endorsed and well matched to the product being endorsed, can be effective at positively influencing consumers purchase intentions. This is comparable to the research findings by Pornpitakpan (2003b) on the use of celebrity brand endorsers. Thus, given an appropriate target market, video game characters may be used in place of normal celebrities as brand endorsers.

Considering the risks which are present in the use of celebrities as brand endorsers and the benefits which were discussed previously for the use of video game characters, in some situations it would be preferable to use a video game character in place of an ordinary celebrity to endorse a brand.

This research included a comprehensive literature review and also conducted an empirical quantitative research study into the effectiveness of using a video game character as a brand endorser. In conclusion to this study it can be said that given the popularity of using endorsers in advertising, and the statistical results of this research, the issue of using video game characters in place of celebrity endorsers should receive more attention from both advertising practitioners and marketing researchers in the future.

Given the popularity of using spokespersons in advertising, the issue of using video game characters as celebrity endorsers should receive more attention from both advertising practitioners and marketing researchers.

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Appendix A

Research Questionnaire

Participant Information Sheet

Hi, my name is Jake Shelton. I am a student at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of completing my Masters degree, in marketing, I need to conduct a research survey.

I invite you to participate in this voluntary survey. It should take no more than 10 to 15 minutes of your time.

The aim of this survey is to obtain feedback from you on the topic of using video game characters to endorse different brands. The findings will aid in investigating a modern approach to advertising, and will investigate an area of marketing where there is no previous research. The data is being collected for research purposes only.

This study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part. By completing the survey you are giving consent to participate in the study. All responses received are anonymous, and information collected will not be distributed to any other party. You can choose to withdraw from completing the questionnaire at any time and there will be no negative consequences if you choose not to answer certain questions.

The survey consists of three sections. When evaluating the questions, please answer the question from your own perspective. Place an X in the appropriate box and complete where necessary.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Should you have any questions or if you would like a copy of a summary of the final research report, please feel free to contact me on:

Email: jake.shelton@students.wits.ac.za

Tel: 082 633 8134

In case you have any questions or queries my supervisors' details are

Mr. Norman Chiliya

Email: norman.chiliya@wits.ac.za

Tel: 011 717 8063

INSTRUCTIONS

- **Please look at the adverts which are displayed and choose the one which appeals most to you, and answer the questions that follow based on the advert which you have chosen.**
- **Please read each question carefully.**
- **Please complete all the questions.**
- **Please complete the questionnaire on your own and don't compare your answers with your friends**.
- **This questionnaire will be kept completely confidential so please answer the questions as honestly as you can.**

SECTION A – BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

PLEASE INDICATE YOUR RESPONSE BY DRAWING A CROSS IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX.

1. Gender

1	Male	
2	Female	

2. Age

SECTION B – ADVERTISEMENT

Please indicate your answer by drawing a cross in the appropriate box

3. Do you play video games?

1	Yes	
2	No	

4. On average how often do you play video games?

1	Every day	
2	3 to 5 times a week	
3	1 to 2 times a week	
4	1 to 2 times a month	
5	Never	

5. Do you recognize the character in the advertisement?

1	Yes	
2	No	

6. Do you like the character in the advert?

1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Neutral	

7. Do you like the brand in the advert?

1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Neutral	

8. Do you like the advert?

Strongly Dislike Strongly Like

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. Do you think the advert is effective?

Not Effective Very Effective

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. After seeing the advert would you be likely to consider buying the product?

Unlikely Very Likely

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. After seeing the advert would you be likely to look for more information about the product?

Unlikely Very Likely

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. After seeing the advert would you be likely to look for the product at your local store?

Unlikely Very Likely

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. After seeing the advert would you be likely to inquire about the product at your local store?

Unlikely Very Likely

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14. After seeing the advert would you be likely to buy the product?

Unlikely Very Likely

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SECTION C – VIDEO GAME CHARACTER

Please indicate your answer by drawing a cross in the appropriate box

15. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Unattractive Attractive

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

16. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Untrustworthy Trustworthy

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

17. I feel that the video game character in the advert is _____ in relation to the product.

Not an Expert an Expert

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

18. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Not Classy Classy

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

19. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Undependable Dependable

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

20. I feel that the video game character fits with the brand in the advert

Bad Fit Good Fit

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

21. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Inexperienced Experienced

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

22. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Ugly Beautiful/ Handsome

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

23. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Dishonest Honest

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

24. I feel that the video game character matches with the brand in the advert

Bad Match Good Match

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

25. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Not Knowledgeable Knowledgeable

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

26. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Plain Elegant

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

27. I feel that the video game character is compatible with the brand in the advert

Not Compatible Compatible

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

28. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Unreliable Reliable

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

29. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Unqualified Qualified

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

30. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Not Sexy Sexy

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

31. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Insincere Sincere

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

32. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Unskilled Skilled

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

33. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Unlikeable Likeable

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

34. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Unpleasant Pleasant

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

35. I feel that the video game character in the advert is _____ to me

Unfamiliar Familiar

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

36. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Nasty Nice

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

37. I feel that the video game character is consistent with the brand in the advert

Inconsistent Consistent

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

38. I feel that the video game character in the advert is _____ to me

Dissimilar Similar

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

39. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Unfriendly Affable

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

40. I feel that the video game character in the advert is _____ to me

Unalike Alike

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

41. I feel that the video game character in the advert is

Disagreeable Amiable

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

42. I feel that the video game character in the advert is _____ to me

Unrelated Relatable

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

43. If you have any comments please write them below

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. All information will be treated as confidential and not disclosed without discretion.

Appendix B

Research Advertisements


HUGO
DEEP RED
DEEP RED
FRAGRANCE FOR MEN
BOSS
HUGO BOSS

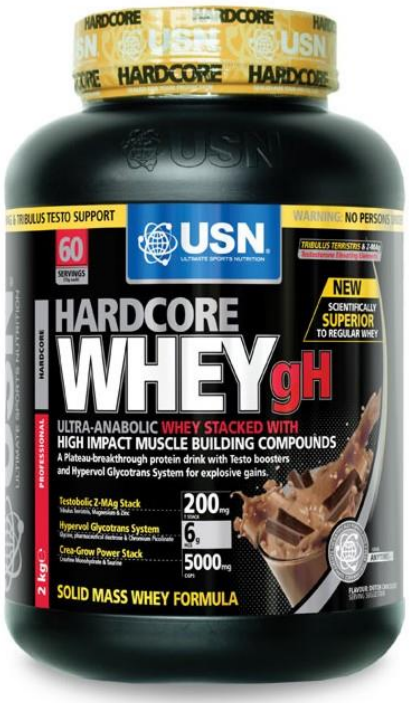

DKNY
DONNA KARAN NEW YORK
Red
DELICIOUS
100%
PURE NEW YORK
DKNY
Red
DELICIOUS
100%
PURE NEW YORK



USN
ULTIMATE SPORTS NUTRITION

HARDCORE
WHEY gH
ULTRA-ANABOLIC WHEY

ARE YOU
HARDCORE
ENOUGH?




THE FOSSIL LIFESTYLE
YOUR FOSSIL · YOUR WAY
AUTHENTIC
FOSSIL®
GENUINE


NEED ENERGY FAST?
GRAB A Lucozade
Lucozade
ENERGY


AXE
Music
TAP YOUR INNER ROCK STAR





METAL GEAR SOLID
PEACE WALKER

SONY

LIMITED EDDITION
WEARABLE WALKMAN


Kellogg's
Special K
Bar
90 Calories
per bar
chocolatey pretzel
ONLY 90
CALORIES
GET YOUR BODY BEACH READY
IN JUST TWO WEEKS WITH
Special K