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# The Match-Up hypothesis under a Social Class Perspective

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Dissertation written under the supervision of  
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## **Abstract**

The Match-up hypothesis suggests that the stronger the match (*i.e.* the congruence, adequacy), between both a celebrity and a product, the more effective an endorsement will be. Although multiple attributes could be responsible for such phenomenon, extant literature has only focused on the celebrity's attractiveness (physical and/or intellectual) and credibility (expertness and trustworthiness), having empirical findings showed a positive relationship. In this paper, we examine the match-up hypothesis under a social class perspective. An experiment, consisting of two surveys, was conducted to evaluate both the perceived adequacy of a celebrity-product match and its impact on consumers' purchase intentions. Results revealed that, although the match enhanced consumer's perceived adequacy, this rise was not translated into greater purchase intentions.

Furthermore, plausible explanations based on the specificities of the sample and behavioural theories are addressed. Theoretical and managerial implications on match-up endorsement using social cues are, equally, discussed.

**Keywords:** Match-up hypothesis, celebrity endorsement, social class, advertisement

**Category:** Master Thesis, Research Paper

**“The Match-Up hypothesis under a Social Class Perspective”**

**João Bernardo Faia do Jogo Ribeiro da Silva**

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## Resumo

A teoria de “Match-up hypothesis” (hipótese de combinação) sugere que quanto mais intensa, forte, for a combinação (*i.e.*, a congruência ou adequação) entre a celebridade e o produto promovido, maior será a eficácia do endosso.

Apesar de vários atributos poderem ser responsáveis por tal fenómeno, a literatura existente tem-se apenas focado na atratividade (aparência, física e/ou intelectual) e na credibilidade (perícia e confiança) de uma celebridade, tendo os estudos realizados demonstrado, empiricamente, uma relação positiva entre as mesmas e a sua eficácia na publicidade e propaganda.

No presente trabalho, examinamos a existência da “match-up hypothesis” sob uma perspectiva de classe social. Um experimento/estudo, consistindo em dois questionários, foi conduzido com o objetivo de avaliar tanto a adequação percebida entre celebridade e produto assim como o impacto da última nas intenções de compra dos consumidores.

Os resultados revelaram que, não obstante ao facto do o referido “match” realçar e aumentar a adequação percebida pelo consumidor, esse aumento não se traduz num crescimento das intenções de compra.

Além do mais, possíveis explicações baseadas em especificidades da amostra recolhida e em teorias comportamentais são apresentadas. Implicações teóricas e práticas, em relação ao endosso via “match-up hypothesis”, são, igualmente, discutidas.

**Palavras-chave:** Match-up hypothesis, celebrity endorsement (endosso), social class (classe social), advertisement (propaganda)

**Categoria do Artigo::** Tese de Mestrado, Trabalho de Investigação

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## INTRODUCTION

Celebrity endorsement is a form of advertising that consists in the use of an individual's name and image for the purpose of promoting a good or service. The use of celebrity endorsers has become one of the major marketing strategies for advertisers who seek to build a brand's recognition as well as help consumers to make better-informed consumption decisions (Chi, Yeh & Huang 2009).

In fact, current estimates indicate that every fourth to fifth advertisements incorporates this strategy, despite differences across countries (USA: 19%-25%, Elberse & Verleun, 2012 and Stephens & Rice 1998; UK: 21%, Pringle & Binet 2005; India: 24%, Crutchfield 2010; Japan: 70%, Kilburn 1998; Taiwan: 45%, Crutchfield 2010), in contexts as diverse as: political marketing (Chou 2014, 2015), health-related campaigns (Judith et al., 1992; Larson et al., 2005), non-profit and governmental communication (Jackson, 2008; Wheeler, 2009; Young & Miller, 2015) and consumption appeals (McCracken, 1989; Solomon, 1996; Martin, 1996).

Although the positive effects of celebrity endorsement are widely documented (McCracken, 1989; Martin, 1996; O'Mahony & Meenagan, 1997), a myriad of studies sought to understand the contexts under which this strategy elicits the most positive marketing outcomes.

The match-up hypothesis is a concept built upon the rationale that endorsers are more effective when there exists a "fit" between themselves and the product being advertised (Kamins, 1990). Thus, this framework is applied to and describes every situation where the message conveyed by the image of the celebrity and the image of the product converge (Kahle & Homer, 1985). Nonetheless, research in the field has mostly focused on solely two types of congruence: attractiveness (Singer, 1983; McGuire, 1985; Erdogan, 1999) and credibility, which is composed by both expertness as well as trustworthiness (Hovland & Weiss 1951; Hovland et al, 1953; Dholakia et al., 1977; Goldberg & Hartwick, 1990; Ohanian, 1990; Solomon, 1996).

For example, attractiveness increases the effectiveness of an advertisement whenever the product under analysis is aimed at enhancing consumers' personal image (Erdogan, 1999).

On the other hand, concerning expertness and trustworthiness scholars suggest that both the explicit and tacit knowledge learnt and owned by an endorser, in a specific domain, play a determinant role in the degree of effectiveness of an advertisement (Hovland, 1953; Atkin & Block, 1983; Erdogan, 1999; Chang, 2011).

Moreover, for a clearer understanding of the analysis and further discussion, the meaning transfer model (MTM), which argues that there are singular symbolic meanings passed by celebrities to the endorsed product affecting the effectiveness of the advertisements, is introduced (McCracken, 1989; Langmeyer et al, 1991; Brierley, 1995; Roy, 2016). This model, firstly mentioned by McCracken (1986) explains the celebrity endorsement phenomenon as a whole, including its “continuum” condition (*i.e.*, the celebrity endorser as a medium of the message conveyed).

Additional frameworks as the social adaptation theory (Kahle & Timmer, 1983; Kahle, 1984) and attribution theory (Jones & Davis 1965; Smith & Hunt, 1978; Folkes, 1988) have also been addressed when explaining, developing and justifying the match-up hypothesis.

Although Meta-analytic evidence has provided evidence to the match-up hypothesis (Knoll & Matthes, 2016), scholarly research has acknowledged that it still remains difficult to know which dimensions marketers should match on to enhance persuasion (Amos et al., 2008). Existent research has, thus, overlooked the role of demographic characteristics of endorsers without considering external and non-intrinsic attributes, often related to one’s surroundings and environment. As once stated by Ortega y Gasset (1914): “I am I and my circumstance”; interactions between individuals and their surrounding environments (being them cultural, economic or social, for instance) cannot and shall not be forgotten and unconsidered.

Throughout this dissertation we advocate that social class is an important, yet-to-be explored characteristic to be match on. In fact, social class has been a common practice in marketing when planning and defining segmentation strategies but has not been fully applied to all its branches (Demby, 1989; Yankelovich & Meer, 2006).

## **Objectives**

We aim to examine whether there is a match between the endorser and the product advertised in terms of social class (*i.e.*, if the social class of the endorser is congruent and fits the type of product regarding its nature and value). In doing so, we do also investigate the extent to which such match affects the consumers’ attitudes towards the endorsed products and brands, measured by their preferences and purchase intentions. Furthermore, may also some of the registered trends regarding endorser-consumer relationship be commented on as well as discussed for the sake of the deepness of the analysis.

### **Relevance of the study**

This study contributes to the extant literature by identifying, yet, another dimension in the match-up hypothesis analysis besides the credibility and attractiveness only studied so far. It explores the social class as a new variable in the “match-up hypothesis equation” involving both a celebrity endorser and a specific product. Equally, do we evaluate until what extent does the quality of the referred match (positively) influence the consumers’ purchase intentions, as well as other aspects like their own preferences and perceptions. Through means of “intermediate analysis” (*i.e.*, pre-test) an understanding of the accuracy of the consumers’ perceptions regarding the celebrities’ true reality (“stage persona” vs their real self) is also achieved and helps to better shape future commercial actions to the market.

Furthermore, we do contribute to an emerging body of research linking social class, and other relevant social & economic characteristics, to marketing efforts in the field of behavioral economics.

## **Literature Review**

### **Product/Advertising Endorsement**

Advertising may be seen as the art of persuasion that is mainly concerned to create awareness about what is being offered with the ultimate objective of leading consumers towards buying; in the words of William Bernbach: “Advertising is fundamentally persuasion and persuasion happens to be not a science, but an art.”.

On the other hand, endorsements are, no more than, a form of advertising which is characterized by using personalities or celebrities, who command a high degree of recognition, trust or awareness amongst people, according to the online newspaper *TheEconomicTimes*. Such personalities, the endorsers, advertise for a product lending, then, their names and/or images in order to promote the desired good or service. Both advertisers and clients hope, consequently, that those established “partnerships” will, effectively, influence buyers in a favourable way

It is with this feeling and expectation that companies perform significant financial investments in juxtaposing brand and organizations with endorser qualities such as attractiveness, likeability and trustworthiness (Erdogan, 1999).

Advertising endorsers, besides being an efficient strategy to fast build a brand recognition and help consumers to understand functions (as well as characteristics) of a product, are often famous celebrities or experts who hold specific, as well as unique, qualities that are considered to effectively transmit product messages to catch consumers’ eyesight in a short time and further enhance their purchase intentions. If an endorser can connect well with a product, it can easily intensify consumers’ memory on brand awareness and product image (Chi, Yeh & Tsai, 2009)

Endorsement marketing is, so, a strategy able to give every product a new image and extra experience to customers, further increasing the product’s recognition (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999; Goldsmith, Lafferty & Newell, 2000; MacInnis, Ran & Weiss, 2002).

## **Types of Endorsers and Endorsements**

Every person, independently of his/hers position in the society, is different from one another and the same may be applicable to products and, even, brands. Therefore, there exist several types of endorsers and endorsements whose perfect combinations are the main goal of marketers.

To what concerns endorsers, they can range, according to their nature, from typical consumers to professional experts, company presidents (and high hierarchical positions) and celebrities (Friedman, Termini & Washington, 1976). Furthermore, and for the sake of the analysis, one may only distinguish between celebrity and non-celebrity endorsers due to their similarities in terms of public opinions, recognition and perceptions. Friedman and Friedman (1979) defined celebrity as "...an individual who is known to the public (for instance: actor, sports figure, singer, etc.) for his/her achievements in areas other than that of the product endorsed.". Celebrities tend to be preferred as endorsers since they are often seen as cultural symbols that reflect the values and ideas of a particular culture independently of its dimension in the society, and its usage is rather appropriate when purchases involve a high social and psychological risk (Friedman & Friedman, 1978; Atkin & Block, 1983).

On the other hand, in regard to endorsements, according to McCracken (1989), four distinct modes can be distinguished: the explicit mode ("I endorse this product"), the implicit mode ("I use this product"), the imperative mode ("You should use this product") and, finally, the co-present mode (an endorsement where the endorser, celebrity for instance, merely appears with the product); being the later, the one used and tested in the upcoming research.

## **Celebrity Endorsement**

Celebrity endorsement is a century-old marketing practice and not a recent phenomenon (Kaikati, 1987), as the association between Queen Victoria (1819-1901), of the United Kingdom and Ireland, and Cadbury's Cocoa (Shennan, 1985) constitutes a perfect example. Findings show that the weight of celebrity advertisements over the total number of ads corresponded to around 30% in western countries (Choi, Lee & Kim, 2005) and 60% in Asian countries (Hoon & Gill, 2013).

This type of endorsement has revealed to be very effective in capturing consumers' attention towards certain products since it facilitates their mental process of memorizing information and other marketing cues (Chi, Yeh & Huang, 2009).

Along these lines, scholarly research has demonstrated that celebrity endorsers produce more positive attitudes and greater purchase intentions than non-celebrity endorsers (Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann 1983; Atkin and Block 1983).

As a result, although they may not be a celebrity, or ever become one, the typical consumer still, symbolically, aspires to identify with certain reference groups by purchasing the product recommended by the celebrity (Assael, 1984). In this context, Atkin and Block (1983) present two reasons why a famous endorser may be so influential: celebrity spokespeople are traditionally viewed as being highly dynamic and their fame is thought to attract attention to the product or brand.

However, this kind of endorsement tends to be an expensive strategy which involves certain risks as financial ones or the possibility of, negatively, altering the brand image if either the endorsement itself does not yield as expected (Kaikati, 1987) and there occurs any type of misbehaviour, negative transgression, carried by the celebrity, which spills over to the brand and products endorsed (Till & Shimp, 1998; Bailey, 2007; Edwards & La Ferle, 2009; Fong & Wilbur, 2009; White, Goddard & Wilbur, 2009; Um, 2013).

Celebrity endorsements are, thus, an omnipresent feature of present day marketing (O'Mahony & Meenagan, 1997), and rather than the simple usage of their recognition on behalf of certain products (McCracken, 1989), they must be seen and understood as an (contractual) agreement between both celebrities and companies (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016).

## **Types of Products**

Product is everything, which is, produced either with a commercial or non-commercial purpose. However in the present study, in order to facilitate the interpretation and analysis of the content, we consider a product any good produced by a company that aims to satisfy human needs and provide utility for its consumer(s).

Products can, thus, be classified according to different criteria: usage/finality (consumer, B2C/industrial, B2B); monetary value, *i.e.*, price; necessity intended to satisfy, *i.e.* nature, (necessary/basic or luxury); excludability & rivalry (private, public, common or artificially scarce); tangibility (tangible or intangible); durability (durable, nondurable or service); income elasticity of demand (normal/inferior); or even associated shopping habits (convenience, shopping, speciality or unsought) (Krugman & Wells, 2009).

In the research carried, we focused on the products in terms of their (monetary) value and necessity levels (nature), *i.e.*, considering solely basic and luxury goods (conspicuous), which are both normal goods to what income-demand relationship concerns.

## **Purchase Intention**

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), the purchase intention (of a consumer) consists in a construct of both the consumer's attitude and the assessment of external factors. Purchase intention can be seen as a measure of the consumer's possibility to buy a product, which will positively influence their willingness to buy that same product (Dodds et al., 1991; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). This mentioned measure indicates that consumers will follow their experience, preferences and external environment to collect information, evaluate alternatives and make a purchase decision (Zeithaml, 1988; Dodds et al., 1991; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000; Yang, 2009). We may, then, affirm that consumers' purchase intention comes from consumers' perception(s) on benefits and values acquisition, being an important key to predict a consumer's purchase behaviour.

Monroe and Krishman (1985) submitted that perceived value and perceived quality will influence purchase intention, and that, in consequence, the higher/better the perceived value and quality, the higher/stronger the purchase intention.

## **Social Class**

Encyclopædia Britannica refers to “social class” as a group of people within a society who possess the same socioeconomic status (SES), *i.e.*, the same social standing, “level”, of an individual in terms of: education (Snibbe & Markus, 2005), income (Drentea, 2000), occupation and its status (Oakes & Rossi, 2003) or a composite of the three (Winkleby, Jatulis, Frank & Fortmann, 1992; American Psychology Association, n.d.).

Some contemporary definitions of social class tend to be solely concerned with the level of economic resources that one possesses (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). Thus, in resource terms, social class, according to the literature, is the way in which levels of experienced resources change how individuals perceive their social environments and relationships (Kraus, Piff & Rhheinschmidt, Mendoza-Denton & Keltner, 2012).

However, as addressed by Kraus & Park (2017), social class is defined by structural dynamics characteristic of a society which shape proximal social environments that influence how individuals express their internal states and motivations

Therefore, social class is not circumscribed to the material basis one holds since it represents a major social context in which individuals navigate in enduring and pervasive ways over their life course (Kraus et al., 2012).

Social class incorporates not only an objective measure of one’s material resources (*e.g.*: educational attainment, wealth and occupational prestige) but also a subjective perception of an individual’s perceived rank within the social hierarchy (Piff, Kraus & Keltner, 2009)

As a result, social class may be interpreted as a source of social identity that ultimately influences one’s socialization, as well as patterns of construal. In the sequence, people end up identifying themselves with a particular group (social class) and tend to share environments as well as relationships and preferences with those from similar background (Hout, 2008). For this reason consumers have their own preferences regarding some endorsers, mainly celebrities, who besides their current high status come from similar origins and belong to the target consumers’ social class considering all measures except the possessed wealth.

It is on this basis and assumption that the present research lays on: we do expect consumers to identify themselves and the products promoted, measured by their nature and value (price), with the celebrities who endorse them. Although it may be possible for social class to change over time through continued experiences in different social contexts it is rather unusual (Kraus et al, 2012), and, so, a person independently of his/her “celebrity status” will always belong to a certain social group, playing over its members a higher relative influence.

### **A note on Social class and Product match**

A product may match any of the “parties” involved in several aspects being one the social class. Most of the literature has focus on a perceived and understood match in terms of objective measures between either endorser and the product or the endorser and the consumer. Subjective measures like social class, mainly due to their comparative nature, have been set aside. However, whereas power and status (communicated through education, income or professional careers) involve individual positions within a hierarchy, social class links a person to a group of other individuals that share a similar standing (Kraus & Stephens, 2012) and should exert influences on group relations and inter-group interactions (Cote, Kraus, Piff, Bermann & Keltner, 2015). In addition, as addressed by Blascovich et al. (2001) and Kraus et al. (2012), people use social class to categorize one another during social interactions and spend a majority of their daily lives in environments sorted on the basis of social hierarchies. At the end, people will always tend to associate, as addressed by the social adaptation theory (Kahle & Timmer, 1983; Kahle, 1984), the endorser and the products they share similarities with, being the purpose of this work to find empirical evidence supporting such beliefs.

### **Match-up Hypothesis**

The match-up hypothesis suggests that there may exist specific characteristics of both an advertised product and its endorser that are congruent within themselves under certain perspectives (Erdogan, 1999). In addition, whenever that congruence, or “fit”, is registered, the advertisement becomes more effective, as well as, believable (Levy, 1959; Forkan, 1980; Kamins 1990; Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Kotler, 1997). The determinant of the “match” lies on the perceptions of consumers, which although being usually consistent with the reality they may also diverge a little since they depend on personal opinions (Misra & Beatty, 1990).

For this reason, the attribution theory (Kelley, 1973; Folkes, 1988; Trip, et al, 1994) and social adaptation theory (Kahle & Timmer, 1983; Kahle, 1984) have been addressed as possible explanations for the match verified between several products and their endorsers.

The conceptual argument of the theory *per se* is that attractive celebrities are more effective as endorsers for products which are used to enhance one’s attractiveness, leading, as a result, to higher brand attitude and purchase intentions (Kamins, 1990; Till et al., 2000).

Therefore, as an example, a good match would be an attractive model presenting and endorsing cosmetic products, whereas a bad match would correspond to an athlete promoting a guitar (Peterson & Kerin, 1977; Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1990).

The previous idea is supported by the findings obtained in past researches, which indicate that characteristics of a celebrity interact positively with the nature of the product endorsed (Friedman & Friedman, 1979; Kamins, 1990; Lynch & Schuler, 1994).

The literature extant regarding this topic has, though, been majorly done under the (physical) attractiveness perspective of the endorser and its interaction with the product features and finalities, leaving room to explore new perspectives and dimensions as the social class of the endorser and the consumer, which we do believe is of extremely relevance as well as it is verified within relationships and built perceptions.

## **Source Models**

Throughout the years several studies have been run in order to better understand the advertisements' effects and the most important components to consider when building a successful marketing strategy.

The effectiveness of an endorser was found to be moderated by various factors (*e.g.*: attractiveness, credibility, expertness, trustworthiness, message and product type, level of involvement, number of endorsements per celebrity and characteristics of the main target groups), which have led to the idealization and construction of some explicative models, the source models, whose purpose is to inform and reflect research of the social influence (Erdogan, 1999).

Two of those models are the Source Credibility Model (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953) and the Source Attractiveness Model (McGuire, 1985), whose purpose is to explain and identify the characteristics of an endorser that most influence a consumer's purchase intention and his/her attitude towards the brand, product and advertisement itself. "External" factors, *i.e.*, non-intrinsic factors of the endorser such as their economic visibility, legal and regulative issues, compatibility of the ads with the overall marketing strategy and potential financial risks, must be simultaneously considered while opting for the perfect endorser to run a company's campaign (Abdussalam, 2014).

However, these models only make assertions regarding the credibility and attractiveness of the message sender, discarding the role of the endorser's as a message medium or the continuity of the message from ad to ad (McCracken, 1989).

Besides their limitations and significant level of subjectivity, in order to assess both the credibility and attractiveness, it is used the method of Truth-of-Consensus. This method is based on the premise that individual's judgements despite being naturally subjective, they are shaped through Gestalt principles of personal perception rather than single characteristics (Patzner, 1983).

### **Source Credibility Model**

Concerning expertness (expertise) and trustworthiness the source credibility model was developed with the purpose of evaluating the impact of the later over endorsement effectiveness (Hovland & Weiss, 1951).

Expertise can be defined as the (perceived) ability of the source to make valid assertions, which may refer either to knowledge, experience or skills possessed and learnt by the endorser (Erdogan, 1999). It does not really matter whether an endorser is an expert in a certain field or not, as long as the target audience perceives him/her as so (Hovland et al, 1953; Ohanian, 1991).

On the other hand, trustworthiness corresponds to the perceived willingness of the source to make valid assertions, *i.e.*, the degree to which the audience perceives that the communicator intends to convey those valid assertions (Hovland et al, 1953). Trustworthiness is build, though, on honesty, integrity and believability as addressed by Erdogan (1999).

According to Goldberg and Hartwick (1990), the credibility of a source determines how much value people attach to the information emanating from that same source and, although it may be totally subjective, research shows that in spite of individual preferences, a high degree of agreement exists among individual to what credibility concerns (Berscheid, et al., 1971).

This model suggests that the explicit and tacit knowledge acquired by an endorser, simultaneously with his/her trustworthiness play a fundamental role in the effectiveness of an advertisement over consumers' attitude, preferences and purchase intentions (Hovland, 1953; Kamen et al., 1975; Fin, 1980; Atkin & Block, 1983; Kleba & Unger, 1983; Erdogan, 1999; Chang, 2011). Moreover, the equally referred "Hovland model" not only holds that sources exhibiting expertness and trustworthiness are credible but also that they are indeed persuasive. (See Appendix 1)

### Source Attractiveness Model

The source attractiveness model holds that the effectiveness of an ad depends on the attractiveness of its endorsers (Cabalero, et al., 1989; Erdogan, 1999) This attractiveness, which goes beyond the celebrity's physical traces (includes, for instance: intellectual skills, personality properties, lifestyles or, even, athletic prowess), is usually built on the basis of "familiarity", "likability" and "similarity" levels perceived by consumers (Baker & Churchill, 1977; Friedman et al., 1978; Joseph, 1982; Debevec & Kernan, 1984; McGuire 1985; Erdogan, 1999).

Familiarity is considered the "absorbed" knowledge of the source through exposure; while likability is the affection one may have for the source itself, as a result of the source's physical appearance and behavior, the attraction. On the other hand, similarity consists on a (supposed) resemblance that may exist between the consumer himself/herself and the celebrity, the endorser (Erdogan, 1999).

All these components contribute for a higher level of attractiveness and, consequently, a higher effectiveness of an ad over consumers; however, one should not forget that attractiveness does not (solely) depend on the celebrity's own and intrinsic qualities, either as a person *per se* or a famous personality, but rather on the qualities of his/her created stage persona (McCracken, 1989).

A well-known quotation from Aristotle, "Beauty is a greater recommendation than any letter of introduction", is suitable in the studied context where a premium is attributed on the basis of (physical) attractiveness (Ohanian, 1991).

Indeed, not only are advertisers, preferably, fond of that concept (especially because it generates gains from dual effects of the endorser's, celebrity, status and its physical appeal) (Singer, 1983), but also consumers tend to assume that people who are good looking and properly attired are smarter, more intelligent and successful, which relates to the so called "halo effect" (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; Gibson & Gore, 2016).

This cognitive bias, characterized by a judgment discrepancy, occurs whenever an individual makes an initial assessment, through a mental heuristic, of another individual and assumes ambiguous information based upon concrete information (Lachman & Bass, 1985; Kahneman, 2013; Rosenzweig, 2014). People tend, consequently, to make constant errors (either positively biased, halo effect, or negatively biased, horn effect) in their judgements due to personal preferences, ideologies, prejudices and social perceptions (Sigall et al., 1975; Greenwald et al., 1995; Kahneman, 2013; Rosenzweig, 2014).

## **Social Influence Theory**

The social influence theory occurs whenever an individual's emotions, opinions or behaviours are affected by others. This theory is the basis for any type of endorsement since its ultimate goal is to influence consumers and get into their minds through messages conveyed by individuals they look up to, influencers, as celebrities are an example.

Social influence can act in a variety of ways, taking the form of: conformity, socialization, peer pressure, leadership, persuasion, sales and marketing (Kelman, 1958 and 1961).

## **Attribution Theory**

The attribution theory, suggests that trait inferences may result in consumers' evaluating multiple product endorsers less favourable than single product endorsers (Kelley, 1973). This means, observers may perceive an actor's action to be distinctive when it occurs in the presence of an entity and does not occur in its absence (Kelley, 1973). Therefore, the theory deals with the process through which individuals infer the causes of behaviour from the observation of the same considered behaviour, and which tend to be activated by awareness and attention, as argued by Tripp, Jensen and Carlson (1994).

The above theory may, so, be used to explain consumers' inferences about the reasons for a product endorser's advocacy (Folkes, 1988).

Folkes (1988) concluded that, on average, when exposed to a single endorsement, consumers attribute the advocacy to an external cause (*e.g.*: a monetary incentive), and, as the number of endorsements "performed" by a celebrity increase, a certain coherency and association between his/her intrinsic, as well as owned, qualities is established.

The attribution theory could, then, be another possible explanation for the existence of a "match-up" effect (Folkes, 1988; Jones & Davis, 1965; Smith & Hunt, 1978).

## **Social Adaptation Theory**

This theory indicates that the adaptive significance of information determines its impact. Kahle and Homer (1985) emphasized in their research that the match-up hypothesis, in the case of celebrity selection, fits well with the social adaptation theory (Kahle, 1984; Kahle & Timmer, 1983). Kamins (1990) does also argue that an attractive model's inclusion in an advertisement may, in some consumer minds, intrinsically prompt the idea that the use of a brand or product endorsed by a celebrity will enhance attractiveness, as it "did" for the celebrity.

The social adaptation theory assumes, so, that people may use information sources as long as they facilitate the adaptation to their environment. This means, if a match exists between a spokesperson and a product on some relevant attribute, the spokesperson becomes an information source of adaptive significance on which people may rely (Kamins, 1990).

Along with this theory arises the concept of "Schema" (mostly used in psychology and cognitive science), first introduced by Jean Piaget (1923) as a heuristic technique to encode and retrieve memories, which consists in a mental construct that describes patterns of thought or behaviour (Di Maggio, 1997), as instance: social schemas, stereotypes and social roles (Georgeon, 2011).

The social adaptation theory, therefore, assumes that schemas grow as a result of dynamic adaptation through assimilation and accommodation, as well as through organization of information; adaptation drives the changes, rather than rationality (Kahle, Homer & Sharon, 1986).

On the other hand, the Schema theory posits that attributes of celebrities can be more easily integrated with existing product schemas if the celebrity schemas match the product schemas (Lynch & Schuler, 1994), *i.e.*, people are more likely to notice things that fit into their schema (Nadkarni & Narayanan, 2007).

Those mentioned schemas, "deposits" of preconceived ideas, have a tendency, according to Nadkarni and Narayanan (2007), to remain unchanged, even in the face of contradictory information; which, may explain the maintenance of the low social class "condition" by celebrities, even though due to significant increases in wealth they can position themselves along high social classes

Both theories, as a consequence, assume enhanced effects in the case of congruence between endorsers and products.

## Meaning Transfer Model

Consumption activity is more than a simple act of consuming a product *per se*; additionally to the satisfaction of a need, consumers look forward to consume meanings that are imbibed in the product brands available and promoted (McCracken, 1986).

A Meaning Transfer Model (MTM) was, so, proposed by McCracken as a way to clarify and explain the role of an endorser as a medium of message, as well as how do consumers develop perceptions towards advertised messages, both of which are not perfectly addressed in the extant source models (McCracken, 1989). According to the theory, thus, the effectiveness of the phenomenon of celebrity endorsement depends on the associated (symbolic) meanings that he/she brings from parts of his/her life (not related to the endorsement) such: as characters played on screen and personal lifestyle, for instance (McCracken, 1989; Brierley, 1995; Roy, 2016). Indeed, Langmeyer and Walker's findings (1991) empirically support the argument originally put forward by McCracken.

The model developed consists in a three-stage meaning transfer process, from both culture and society to products. In the first stage, celebrities generate meanings from their roles, campaigns, traits or accomplishments related to their personal and professional life. Then, in a second stage, those meanings associated with each celebrity are transferred to the product and brand by virtue of the endorsement. Finally, in a third stage, those same meanings are, afterwards, transferred from the (endorsed) products to the consumers via the purchase activity, being, subsequently, consumed (McCracken, 1989). Through this framework, it is expected to find the plausible explanations for the fact that celebrities may be, sometimes, effective when endorsing a product and other times ineffective (McCracken, 1989). Evidence for the meaning transfer occurring in-between the mentioned stages is supported by the extant literature (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; Roy & Moorthi, 2012; Campbell & Warren, 2012).

However, not only may celebrities be often unaware of the meanings they stand for, but also may consumers consume the endorsements unconsciously (McCracken, 1989).

Associations at a cultural and societal level regarding endorsed products are, therefore, of significant relevance and should guide the selection of the celebrity endorsers, especially because the celebrity-product/brand paired effect influences more consumers' attitudes, such as purchase intentions, than do both acting individually (McCracken, 1986; De Houwer, 2007).

(See Appendix 2)

## **Formulation of the Hypotheses**

As it was mentioned earlier, the main purpose of the upcoming discussion is to reach a verdict on the real effect of a celebrity's social class over an advertisement, in terms of its effectiveness on consumers' purchase intentions, when endorsing a specific product. Whether a match between the product endorsed and its endorser considering social related aspects is relevant in a consumption decision is what we aim to explore and conclude.

Based on the discussion of the literature, in order to guide a more effective analysis of the data, two hypotheses were developed. In the present study, the social class of the celebrity, which goes beyond his/her wealth/available income, and the nature, along with the value (price) of an endorsed product, are the characteristics to be considered for the match to take place. As a result the following hypotheses were proposed:

***Hypothesis 1:*** Consumers are able to match the social class of the endorser with the value, as well as, nature of the product endorsed, based on their perceived adequacy;

***Hypothesis 2:*** Higher congruence under a social class perspective between an endorser and a product endorsed (*i.e.*, stronger match) increases advertisement effectiveness, resulting in higher purchase intentions.

## Methodology

### Overview of the Present Research

The present dissertation examines the effect of the social class of a celebrity endorser on the effectiveness of the advertisements, measured by the level of perceived adequacy and the purchase intentions. We expect that a match between the type of product advertised, in terms of its nature and value, and the social class of the endorser (high or low) will give rise to better marketing outcomes.

To properly test the advanced hypotheses, two inter-related and sequential quantitative studies were conducted. The first one, which was actually a pre-test *per se*, aimed to evaluate the perceptions of consumers about celebrities in various domains, including: credibility, familiarity, attractiveness, trustworthiness and perceived social class.

Following the pre-test, our main studied employed two of those celebrities, the ones which presented similar scores in all respects except for social class, to test for the existence of a match between the endorser's social class and the type of product being advertised.

### Pre-test

The pre-test sought to evaluate the perceptions of consumers regarding a pre-selected sample of Brazilian celebrities in terms of various relevant aspects for advertisement. While the questionnaire was designed on the basis of the literature reviewed, the celebrities were selected according to their level of fame within the Brazilian society. Female celebrities were preferred over the male celebrities due to an expected "easiness" of respondents when evaluating all domains, including potential sensible ones such as attractiveness.

This study aimed to provide two celebrities that were perceived as similar (controlled) in all respects except for social class.

### Method

**Participants.** A total of 55 participants took part in this study (54% females), mostly composed by Caucasian individuals (69%), located in the range 18-30 years old (94%) and with a bachelor's degree (69%).

The sample was quite varied in terms of social classes, being the majority from a middle/high class, around 54% (7, 8 and 9 “steps” out of the 10 used to inquire about participants’ social position).

All the participants were either Brazilians or were currently living in Brazil.

The goal of catching a meaningful and diverse sample, so that any bias related to the presence of outliers would be avoided, of individuals from both genders and belonging to different social classes was, thus, partially achieved.

**Procedure.** Social media users from various online platforms were invited to answer an academic questionnaire related to the topic “Publicity and celebrities in Brazil”. Upon clicking on the link, respondents were asked to evaluate eight female Brazilian celebrities on five different dimensions. First respondents provided their perceptions of the celebrities in terms of credibility, familiarity, attractiveness, and trustworthiness using a “likert” scale ranging from 1 (“not at all”) to 5 (“a lot”). Next, participants indicated the perceived position of the celebrity, under analysis, on a socioeconomic ladder similar to that proposed by Piff et al. (2010). The lowest step would correspond to “low social class” whilst the highest step would be “high social class”. We randomized the order in which the eight celebrities were presented to participants in order to avoid order effects. To finalize the survey, respondents filled a demographic questionnaire (containing information on: gender, nationality and place of living, age, level of education, ethnicity, and social class). To what concerns social class, we used the MacArthur scale of subjective social status, in the form of a ten-rung ladder.

## Results and Discussion

We conducted a series of paired-sample t-tests in order to compare endorsers in terms of five different dimensions: credibility, familiarity, attractiveness, trustworthiness and social class. Our results indicated that a pair was particularly adequate, Marina Ruy Barbosa and Grazi Massafera, for the purposes of the conducted study:

The two celebrity endorsers presented similar ratings in terms of credibility ( $M_{\text{Marina}} = 3.52$  vs.  $M_{\text{Grazi}} = 3.62$ ,  $t(49) = -.60$ ,  $p = .55$ ), familiarity ( $M_{\text{Marina}} = 3.42$  vs.  $M_{\text{Grazi}} = 3.46$ ,  $t(49) = -.24$ ,  $p = .81$ ), attractiveness ( $M_{\text{Marina}} = 4.40$  vs.  $M_{\text{Grazi}} = 4.48$ ,  $t(49) = -.51$ ,  $p = .61$ ) and trustworthiness ( $M_{\text{Marina}} = 3.48$  vs.  $M_{\text{Grazi}} = 3.34$ ,  $t(49) = .91$ ,  $p = .37$ ); but differed,

dramatically, to what concerns social class ( $M_{\text{Marina}} = 3.92$  vs.  $M_{\text{Grazi}} = 2.72$ ,  $t(49) = 6.72$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Further, to show that both celebrities were, indeed, representative of high and low social classes, respectively, a comparison between each one and the expected mean (*i.e.*,  $M_{\text{social class}} = 3.00$ ) was established. Independently of their relationship with one another, Marina Ruy Barbosa was identified, by participants, as significantly higher in terms of socioeconomic status when compared to the expected mean ( $t(49) = 6.46$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In contrast, Grazi Massafera was judged as belonging to a lower social class than the expected mean, when considering 10% confidence level ( $t(49) = -1.88$ ,  $p = .06$ ).

## Main Study

In this study, we capitalized on the information gathered from the pre-test (*i.e.*, which would be the most appropriate celebrities to use in the test, the ones who only differentiate between themselves in terms of social class) to examine the advanced study hypotheses

Precisely, the questionnaire aimed to test whether the purchase intentions of the respondents would vary in response to the several possible combinations involving high/low class celebrities and basic/luxury products, measuring, thus, the perceived quality of hypothetical commercial campaigns.

In order to get meaningful and unbiased results, the questions presented were randomized and distributed to the widest range of individuals.

We expected, then, that a match between the endorser's social class and the type of product being advertised would increase both the perceived adequacy of the marketing campaign as well as the purchase intentions for the advertised product.

## Method

**Participants and Design.** A total of 150 individuals took part in this study (35% male and 65% female). The sample was entirely composed by individuals either from Brazil or current living in the country.

Similar to what was registered in the pre-test, the "typical" respondent was a young (average age of 23 years, being the minimum and maximum registered, respectively, 17 years old and 37 years old), Caucasian (57% of the participants considered themselves white, while 29% saw themselves as "pardos" and 11% as blacks), university student (67% respondents were

enrolled in a bachelors program), who belonged to a middle/middle high social class (65% of participants positioned themselves in the sixth or higher “step” in terms of social class, from a total of ten).

We employed, so, a 2 (endorser’s perceived social class: high vs. low) x 2 (type of product: luxury vs. basic) between-subjects design.

The data collected constituted, thus, an important base for the further, as well as consequent, analysis to take place and provide us with important insights and conclusions.

***Procedure.*** The experiment was conducted in various social media platforms as well as in flow points of the city of Rio de Janeiro (south zone and downtown area).

Firstly, individuals were invited to participate in an academic study, with the form of a questionnaire, focused on the “Effectiveness of celebrities on publicity and commercial campaigns.”

Those who agreed to participate were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions. Participants were shown an image of a celebrity perceived as belonging either to the high or the low social class (Marina Ruy Barbosa and Grazi Massafera, respectively) and a product of a brand more typically associated with luxury or basic consumption needs (high price and exclusive granola vs low price and widely available granola, respectively).

In the following, respondents indicated their purchase intention towards the product as well as their perceived adequacy about the advertisement they had just seen, composed by a picture of the celebrity and a picture and price of the product. To that end, participants used a likert-type scale ranging from 1 (minimum) to 5 (maximum). Finally, participants responded to the same demographic questionnaire used in the pre-test, being, then, thanked and debriefed.

The choice of the product, Granola, was based on the fact it is of high consumption within Brazilian market, trendy and often part of a typical Brazilian meal, more specifically the breakfast.

## Results and Discussion

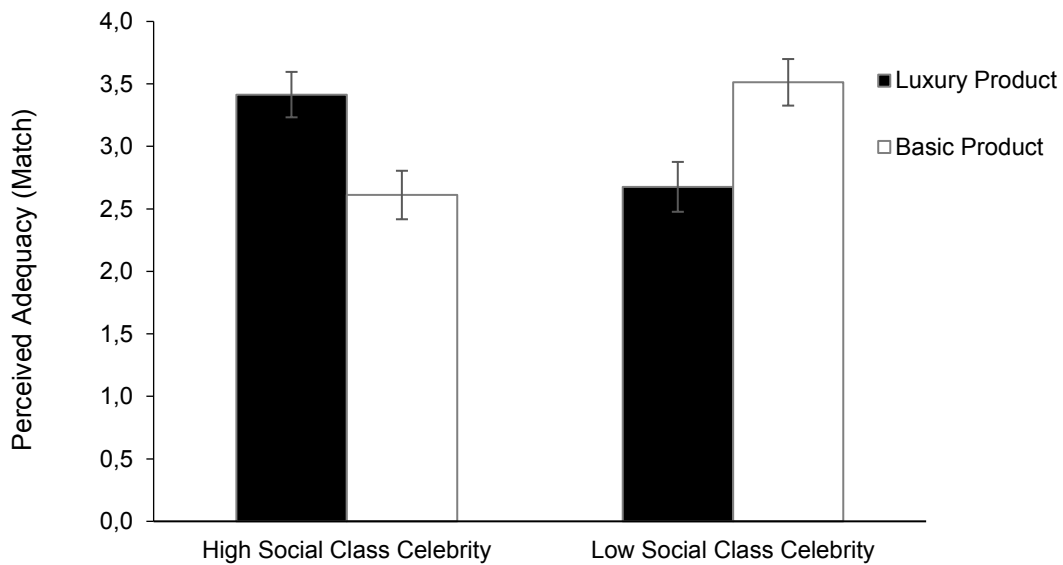
**Randomization check.** To check whether randomization of the emotional valence actually worked, we ran ANOVAs and chi-squared tests on the participants' demographic characteristics.

No systematic differences could be observed for either age ( $F(1, 148) = .29, p = .59$ ), social class ( $F(1, 148) = 1.36, p = .24$ ), gender ( $\chi^2(3) = 1.20, p = .75$ ), ethnicity ( $\chi^2(3) = 3.43, p = .33$ ), education ( $\chi^2(12) = 3.43, p = .86$ ) and nationality ( $\chi^2(3) = .74, p = .86$ ); suggesting, then, an adequate randomization of the experimental conditions.

**The Match-up hypothesis.** We ran an ANOVA to test for the interaction between endorser's social class and the type of product on marketing outcomes.

The first model included: the endorser's social class (1= high, 0= low), the type of product (1= expensive, 0 = cheap) and the interaction term between them as an independent variables; and, the adequacy of the advertisement as the dependent one. As expected, however, the interaction between endorser's social class and type of product was highly significant ( $F(1, 146) = 18.52, p < .001$ ). As shown in figure 1, when the endorser belongs to a higher social class, the expensive product seems more adequate ( $t(146) = 3.02, p = .003$ ), while, in contrast, when the endorser is perceived as being poorer, the expensive product actually decreases adequacy ( $t(146) = -3.06, p = .003$ ). Further, results demonstrate that there was no main effect neither of the endorser's social class ( $F(1, 147) = .18, p = .67$ ) nor of the type of product ( $F(1, 147) = .00, p = .98$ ).

Figure 1. Celebrity Endorser's social class, Type of product and Perceived Adequacy.



The second model included the same terms, being the only difference, in comparison to the first one, the inclusion, and consequently use, of “purchase intention” as the dependent variable. Contrarily to our expectations, the interaction between endorser's social class and type of product failed to reach a relevant level of significance ( $F(1, 146) = .60, p = .44$ ).

In addition, although there was no main effect of the endorser's social class ( $F(1, 147) = .19, p = .66$ ), the effect of the type of product was statistically significant ( $F(1, 147) = 7.53, p = .001$ ).

**Robustness checks.** For the sake of robustness, we reran all the previous analysis controlling for participants' age, social class, gender, ethnicity, education, and nationality. As expected, results remained largely unaltered.

## General Discussion

The match-up hypothesis proposes that endorsers and the products they promote may have certain characteristic in common, which define and contribute to the level of congruence between them, ultimately enhancing marketing outcomes (Kamins, 1990).

Heretofore, only have attractiveness (Singer, 1983; McGuire, 1985; Erdogan, 1999) and credibility (Hovland & Weiss 1951; Hovland et al, 1953; Dholakia et al, 1977; Goldberg & Hartwick, 1990; Ohanian, 1990; Solomon, 1996) been empirically tested for the mentioned congruence, adequacy, leaving, so, plenty of room for further investigation on the several different potential dimensions.

The dissertation aims to understand if consumers are able to perceive a match between an endorser and a product on the “ground of social class” and, being it verified, if the stronger the registered congruence in-between, the higher the (positive) impact over purchase intentions is to be felt (and overall attitudes concerning the product).

Therefore, our literature focus on the effects that a high level of social class congruence might produce on consumers, inquiring if those were to be as positive as the ones raised by the perceived attractiveness, expertness and trustworthiness of the celebrities.

The study was “guided” through a sequential order, beginning with the pre-test, which provided us a clear understanding of the way consumers make associative links and perceive celebrities (although some perceptions were contrary to the reality, which could have led to opposite results, *e.g.*: Actress Taís Araújo, although part of a middle/high social class, was perceived as a low social class citizen), followed by the main study, whose major objective was to ascertain about the defined hypotheses.

The first hypothesis ( $H_1$ ), which claimed that consumers were able to match the social class of the (celebrity) endorser with the nature (basic *vs* luxury) and value (price) of the product endorsed based on their perceived adequacy of the advertisement, was supported by the findings. Our results demonstrated that consumers indeed associate a cheaper, non-exclusive product (*e.g.*: Granola from a private brand, “Qualitá”) with low social class celebrities (Grazi Massafera) and, inversely, associate premium and more expensive products (*e.g.*: high quality Granola, “Grano Square”) with high social class endorsers (Marina Ruy Barbosa).

In these terms, our empirical findings came in accordance with, and confirmed, the social adaptation theory and the “schemas” framework (Lynch & Schuler, 1994; Nadkarni & Narayanan, 2007), both of which suggesting that people are more likely to notice products and brands that fit into the endorsers’ mental schemas (*i.e.*: mental constructs that describe patterns of thought or behaviour). This result, constituted a major contribution of our work for the celebrity endorsement, since we conclude that the match can also occur under a social (class) perspective, besides the other dimensions previously studied.

On the other hand, the second stated hypothesis (H<sub>2</sub>) tested if a higher adequacy, congruence, between the celebrity and the product, would contribute to an increase in consumers’ purchase intentions. However, this hypothesis was rejected because the dependent variable “purchase intentions” would no be significantly influenced by the interaction between both independent variables “celebrity’s social class” and “product type”. Our findings reveal, then, that the increase in perceived adequacy in the presence of congruence between endorser and product was not accompanied by a similar rise in purchase intentions. A few reasons for this failure might be related to the: product’s price display on the survey, which may have led respondents to answers solely based on that given information; product chosen per se, if not of interest and usual consumption; time constraints and urge to rapidly finish the questionnaire; and/or, ultimately, the very weak, or inexistent, congruence of a match and the consumers’ purchase intention.

Nevertheless, even if not statistically significant, some findings and trends registered are worth of mentioning for the sake of the topic discussed: respondents positioned in lower social class “extracts”, in contrast to high social class individuals, did not establish any association between the lower social class endorser and the luxury product, and maintained this trend when asked about the purchase intention regarding the same product (as the high social class individuals did, although not so strongly, when facing a similar/familiar endorser, concerning social background, and a basic, cheap, product). This finding can be related to the social adaptation theory (Kahle & Timmer, 1983; Kahle, 1984) in the sense that individuals by not perceiving an endorser, whom they relate to, representative of a social class prompt by the type of product endorsed, may respond to that “gap” negatively by not demonstrating any willingness to try or buy the same product.

In addition, the Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken 1986 and 1989) does, equally, play a role here, although, inversely to what is its usual application, *i.e.*, instead of showing a higher purchase intention towards products whose main attribute would be of interest to acquire (in the case, the attribute is social class, however, with all the restraints and limitations it concerns), respondents showed a lower purchase intention towards the products whose most significant attribute we expect they would not want to acquire (products characteristic of their opposite social class and promoted by the a celebrity considered representative of their social group).

Such expectation, though, is based on the fact that individuals do feel a certain level of belongingness to their social and cultural environments, being it exalted by the usage of a celebrity they associate with, and, so, do not want to acquire a product so contrasting with their condition.

## **Main Conclusions and Future Research**

### **Theoretical and Managerial Implications**

Several implications can and should be drawn from the present work in order to enlarge the existent literature and develop managerial practices, mainly in terms of marketing and communication techniques in B2B markets.

To what concerns theoretical implications, this study contributes to a growing body of research on celebrity endorsement, by shedding light on an unexplored dimension of the match-up hypothesis, which is of an extremely relevance for the enrichment and understanding of the phenomenon (Whetten, 1989; Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007). Specifically, we studied how does the match between an endorser's social class and the type of product influence consumers' attitudes and intentions, irrespective of attractiveness, expertness (or expertise) and trustworthiness.

From a practical perspective, our results indicate several managerial actions beneficial for companies in terms of marketing and advertising.

On the one hand, the present study allows practitioners, to understand the differences in communication provided by different celebrity endorsers and types of products. Put differently, businesses can use the findings from this work as an initial point when defining, as well as planning, either a new commercial campaign or a communication strategy.

Along these lines, our results suggest that companies should explore the social class when considering the marketing strategy, as consumers take it in consideration when assessing the adequacy of advertisements.

As a result, in order to increase its effectiveness not only in reaching but also in (positively) influencing consumers, companies should create advertisements and develop other means of communication able to trigger associative connections and emotional links between consumers, celebrities endorsers and products.

By portraying a story or line of thought under a social perspective, companies stimulate a sense of belongingness in each consumer, who will relate to both the product and its endorser, increasing, then, his/her purchase intentions and preferences towards that specific consumption act.

Based on these acknowledgments, marketers are in conditions to "shape" and design especially directed strategies in accordance with the social characteristic of the involved parts in the process, extracting the maximum surplus from the market and its target groups.

By exploring a new dimension of the match-up hypothesis framework we expect to increase the average endorsements' effectiveness since, according to the case, social class might be used alone for achieving a match between product-endorser or might be combined with other dimensions so that positive interactions effects and synergies are enjoyed, contributing, in either ways, to an increase in the product differentiation, a tactic which grows as markets mature and tend to saturation.

Overall, this study shows the differences in communication derived from the several possible combinations of celebrity endorsements a company might opt for, considering its sociocultural environment, market and products' characteristics. A better, as well as more specific, support is, then, offered to the decisions processes of both managers and marketers in regards to which celebrity would better suit the desired product's promotion.

### **Limitations of the Study**

As perfection is a utopia, several limitations were faced during the realization of this dissertation.

In respect to the experimental design, the use of only one product from a specific category (*i.e.*, granola) brings little insight into the boundary conditions of the observed phenomenon. It could be the cases that study results do not replicate in different settings involving other product categories. Additionally, differences in terms of personal preferences and tastes, for certain products and brands, may have also contributed to the later mentioned limitation, since it is quite impossible to reunite a unanimous agreement. Accordingly, the same limitation might be true for the celebrities under analysis.

Further, both the pre-test and the main study might incur biases stemming from the non-probabilistic sampling method. For example, results might not be derived from a sample that is representative of the population at large, thereby leading to biases related to the demographic characteristics of the utilized sample, to which geographic delimitations might have also contributed.

Of equal importance are the limitations imposed by the lack of behavioural purchase intention measures. While perceived adequacy relates to the subjective opinion about the observed advertisement, purchase is an intrinsically behavioural factor. Since our findings derive, uniquely, from self-reported measures, we might not exclude the possibility that respondents' purchase intentions might reflect rationalized opinions and not necessarily their actual behavior (*i.e.*, respondents might have opted to "look good" in front of the researchers, even

though the questionnaires were anonymous, and, so, not consciously understood their own behaviors). In the sequence, arises the problem of cognitive dissonance that states that subjects may report and feel attitudes which are consistent with their own past behaviors, so they rationalize situations according to their past experience rather than acting spontaneously (Bertrand et al., 2001).

Finally, since the social class dimension had never been studied before under the framework of the match-up hypothesis, the lack of information regarding this “new topic” in the existent literature constituted also a limitation, but, simultaneously, turned itself into a motivation so that new efforts and contributions could be made.

### **Future Research**

Research focusing on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement effects over consumption, especially considering the match-up hypothesis (Kamins, 1990), is still under development.

Thus, the research and literature related to those topics are, yet, slowly emerging and continue to be very limited. Additionally, although the present work contributes to the current body of research by suggesting another dimension of analysis (and empirically inquiring about its veracity and applicability), there is still room for improvement in the studies conducted, as well as, plenty of unexplored research questions.

Firstly, our analysis has been constrained to a pre-selected group of female Brazilian celebrities, which affords little generalizability to the study findings. Therefore, future research could examine celebrities from both national and international origins, varying in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and other relevant demographic characteristics; for instance, younger consumers tend to be more susceptible to celebrity endorsement effects (Atkin and Block, 1983). The conduction of focus groups to inquire about potential celebrities and endorsers should, equally, be considered. The same suggestions are also true for the type of product to be used.

Although we focused on a reduced number of products from a specific category, future research should examine whether the same findings can be obtained with alternative products. A note regarding the “aesthetics”/visuals of the questionnaires should be made concerning the disclosure of the products’ prices, which should be avoided in future studies so that no self-reporting bias is registered.

Further, culture has a relevant impact on consumer attitudes and intentions (Tan and Farley, 1987); thus, we do, also, recommend future researches to focus on consumers from different

regions, since social adaptation issues might influence and change one's behaviour according to the social situation and external environment. Only by approaching and testing the same object of research across different types of consumers and places can a company ensure an international applicability of a specific strategy. The establishment of cross-national comparisons would also be an interesting tool to better explore the celebrity endorsement topic and its effectiveness over consumers' intentions.

A pilot test and a conjunct of interviews, as well as, focus groups (mainly to ascertain about which would be the best celebrities to use in subsequent tests) should also be an option to carry before going further on the quantitative research analysis.

The design of the experiment is, yet, another an aspect worth of developing in further researches: a laboratory or field experiment in addition to the correlational surveys conducted, should be executed in the sense that, besides the valuable insights already obtained, through questionnaires, they allow us to establish an important, as well as solid, ground for firming conclusions in regards to possible casual relationships.

Finally, studies in this area should also consider the extent to which different dimensions of the match-up hypothesis interact with one another (credibility, familiarity, attractiveness, trustworthiness and social class), as well as, continue the investigations regarding "new ones", yet-to-be explored. Furthermore, possible "matches" between the endorser-consumer and consumer-product, besides the described endorser-product throughout the study, could also be foreseen with the goal of elevating the knowledge about the topic.

With all the information and data gathered, a more complete model regarding the effectiveness of (celebrity) endorsements is, surely, worth of being developed, including all the dimensions studied, so far, in the literature (already including this work's contributions).

## **Conclusion**

Celebrity endorsement is a rather complex marketing strategy due to its high volatility and uncertainty, since its value depends on only an individual. However, due to its strong effect and constant "appearance" in every consumer's day-to-day decisions, it is a topic worth of developing and continuing to study, especially from a company's perspective

The choice of celebrities for endorsement roles often, despite seeming sometimes quite random or impulsive, takes into consideration several attributes, such as attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness (either real or derived from consumers' perceptions).

Although social class is largely used for as a segmentation strategy (mainly through psychographics), it has never been studied from the perspective of the endorser—and nor the consumer. Our work focus, so, on the analysis of social class as the attribute to be applied when looking for a match between endorser and product and until what extent does its existence or level of congruence (fit) positively influences consumers' purchase intentions.

Our findings led us to conclude that consumers do, indeed, match the endorser's social class and the type of product being promoted, but the increase in perceived adequacy is not translated into actual purchase intentions. Nonetheless, we do believe that, although further research should be built on these findings, the understanding generated throughout the dissertation is of value since not only does it contribute to enlarge the extant literature but also does it establish the ground for companies to start approaching and planning endorsement advertisements in a new way, probably more beneficial to some products of their portfolios

At the end, despite divergences from early findings, as we came across since there was no similar research previously done, enhance the interest on the topic (Weick, 1989), findings consistent with prior research, such as the basis for the formulation of the proposed hypotheses, help and contribute to hone the dimensions of understanding (Hollenbeck, 2008).

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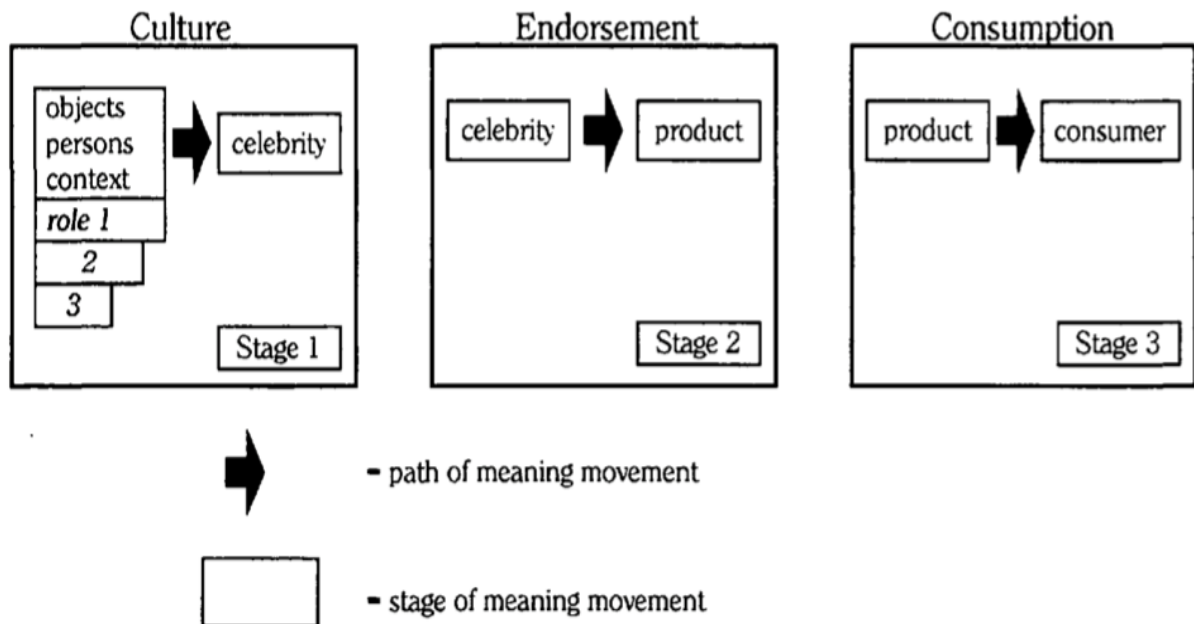
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## Appendix

**Appendix 1** Source Credibility Scale (Ohanian, 1990)

<b>Attractiveness</b>	<b>Trustworthiness</b>	<b>Expertise</b>
Attractive-Unattractive	Trustworthy-Untrustworthy	Expert-Not Expert
Classy-Not Classy	Dependable-Undependable	Experienced-Inexperienced
Beautiful-Ugly	Honest-Dishonest	Knowledgeable-
Elegant-Plain	Reliable-Unreliable	Unknowledgeable
Sexy-Not Sexy	Sincere-Insincere	Qualified-Unqualified
		Skilled-Unskilled

**Appendix 2** Meaning Movement, Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken, 1986 and 1989)



### **Appendix 3** Questionnaire Pre-Test

(Written in Portuguese since the focus of the research was on the Brazilian consumers and society)

#### Opening notes:

“Olá, esta pesquisa está sendo realizada pela Fundação Getúlio Vargas para fins acadêmicos e trata questões relacionadas com marketing e publicidade.

A pesquisa é anônima, como tal nenhum dado pessoal será divulgado.

Ao prosseguir concorda com a utilização das respostas dadas para os fins desejados.

Obrigado!

Irá, de seguida, visualizar várias celebridades brasileiras da atualidade. Queremos a sua opinião, por isso preste atenção!”

Then, the following eight celebrities were shown being each part of a questions’ block which included, also, a question regarding the respondent’s opinion about several dimension/aspect of the celebrity as well their perceptions regarding the celebrity’s social class.

#### Celebrities:

Tata Werneck- Hostess & Actress



Ludmila- Singer



Taís Araújo- Actress



Grazi Massafera- Actress



Cléo Pires- Actress



Camila Pitanga- Actress



Anitta- Singer



Marina Ruy Barbosa- Actress



Main Statistical Questions:

- a) “Sendo 1 o pior (Nada) e 5 o melhor (Muito), como avalia a *(celebridade)* nos seguintes aspetos?”

	1 (Nada)	2	3	4	5 (Muito)
Familiar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Confiável	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Atraente	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Credível	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

b) “Sendo que quanto mais perto chão (1º degrau) maiores as dificuldade sofridas e enfrentadas, de onde acha que a *(celebridade)* iniciou a sua vida e carreira?  
(Clique no degrau correspondente)”



Demographic Questions:

a) Qual o seu género?

Masculino

Feminino

Outro

b) É Brasileiro?

Sim

Não

**c)** Onde reside?

- Brasil
- Exterior

**d)** Em que intervalo se situa?

- <18 anos
- 18-30 anos
- 31-45 anos
- 46-60 anos
- >60 anos

**e)** Qual o seu grau de escolaridade?

- Sem Educação Formal
- Ensino Fundamental 1 (1º ao 5º ano)
- Ensino Fundamental 2 (6º ao 9º ano)
- Ensino Médio
- Ensino Técnico
- Ensino Superior (Graduação)
- Mestrado, MBA ou similar
- Doutorado e Pós-Doutorado

f) Você se considera:

- Preto
- Branco
- Pardo
- Indígena
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

g)

**Imagine que essa escada representa onde as pessoas se situam no Brasil.**

No topo na escada estão as pessoas em melhor situação – aquelas que têm mais dinheiro, mais escolaridade e os empregos mais respeitados. Na base estão as pessoas com as piores condições – aqueles que têm menos dinheiro, menos escolaridade e os empregos menos respeitados.

**Onde você se colocaria nessa escada?**

Por favor, marque o degrau onde você se localiza nesse momento da sua vida em relação a outras pessoas no Brasil.



Onde se colocaria nessa escada?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

Ending notes:

“Muito obrigado pela sua participação! Um resto de bom dia.”

#### Appendix 4 Main Study

(Written in Portuguese since the focus of the research was on the Brazilian consumers and society)

Both the opening and ending notes of this survey, as well as all the demographic questions, were equal to the ones previously used on the Pre-test.

Sequentially, the four possible combinations, formed between two celebrities (Grazi Massafera and Marina Ruy Barbosa) and two pre-selected consumption products (*i.e.*: Granola tradicional “Qualitá” and Granola premium “Grano Square”):

Marina Ruy Barbosa (Atriz) e Granola Tradicional "Qualitá" R\$ 12.90 (1kg)



Marina Ruy Barbosa (Atriz) e Granola Premium "Grano Square" R\$ 39.60 (400g)



Grazi Massafera (Atriz) e Granola Premium "Grano Square" R\$ 39.60 (400g)



Grazi Massafera (Atriz) e Granola Tradicional "Qualitá" R\$ 12.90 (1kg)



Main Statistical Questions:

a) Quão adequada considera a propaganda envolvendo a *celebridade* e o *produto (granola)*?

- Nada Adequada
- Pouco
- Nem Muito nem Pouco
- Muito
- Totalmente Adequada

b) Usando a seguinte escala, nos indique o quão provável seria para si comprar o produto apresentado?

- Muito Improvável
- Improvável
- Nem Provável nem Improvável
- Provável
- Muito Provável