

The Perceived Credibility of Brand Mention in Magazine Articles in Comparison to Advertorials and Traditional Paid Advertisements

The Honors Program

Senior Capstone Project

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the perceived credibility of brand mention in magazine editorials compared to advertorials and traditional paid advertisements. Surveys were administered to three groups of college students after viewing an editorial, an advertorial or a paid advertisement. Respondents were asked to identify their level of agreement regarding credibility, likeability and perceived selling intent of the content.

Results indicate that advertorials are perceived to be less credible than editorials and traditional paid advertisements. Traditional paid advertisements are perceived to be the most credible method of brand mention in magazines. It can also be determined as a result of this study that there is a slight difference in perceived credibility between males and females, most specifically in regards to the characteristics of attractiveness and likeability, objectiveness, and motivation for purchases.

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INTRODUCTION

Consumer magazines publish seemingly objective articles on a variety of topics pertaining to the subject matter of the publication. For example, articles are published regarding make-up in fashion magazines, and weight lifting techniques in a men's health publication. The unsuspecting consumer may likely interpret a positive brand statement in a feature article as unbiased and objective.

As a result, message credibility and product evaluation may be more positive in the eyes of the consumer if a third party was unsolicited in their brand mention than if the consumer thought a company paid to have its brand mentioned. Also, it is common practice for a publisher to feature or mention brands in articles which advertise heavily in the publication. From a consumer learning perspective, product placements may be processed differently than traditional advertising because consumers may not know or understand their commercial intent.

The purpose of this research is to determine the effect of various forms of product placement in magazines. Preliminary exploration, in regards to the Persuasion Knowledge Model, comparing the different types of magazine advertising currently being used, suggests that brand mention in the context of a magazine article is seen as less biased than a traditional advertisement or advertorial. It also appears that advertorials are perceived to be less biased than traditional advertisements. It may be that readers falsely believe that all articles are written by unbiased writers who are not influenced or paid by product manufactures and that most in the target age group of their study were unaware that the products being featured in such articles are in fact paid placements, and that the products featured in advertorials take it one step further, as the article itself is a paid advertisement.

For the purpose of this study, there are three different types of product placement advertising in magazines: an editorial, an advertorial, and a traditional paid advertisement. An editorial is an article in the publication that expresses the opinion of the senior editorial staff or the publisher. An advertorial is a type of print advertisement designed to resemble editorial

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content. The term, ‘advertorial’, is a combination of the words, ‘advertisement’ and ‘editorial.’ An advertorial is typically formatted to look like a legitimate and independent news story, however the tone of an advertorial is usually more similar to a press release. An advertorial may or may not contain a disclaimer, such as the word ‘advertisement’ or may be described as a ‘special promotional feature.’ A traditional paid advertisement is more familiar to consumers as it is a form of communication intended to persuade a specific audience to take some action regarding a product or service. A traditional advertisement is paid for by the company and typically includes the name of the product or service as well as how that product or service could benefit the consumer. A traditional paid advertisement usually works to persuade consumers to purchase or consume that particular brand.

This research examines how consumers judge the perceived credibility and effectiveness of editorials and advertisements, both advertorials and traditional, taken directly from popular magazines within their age range. This study will help to prove the idea that brand mention in magazine articles will be perceived as less biased than advertorials, and traditional paid advertisements. Also being highlighted within this survey is the notion that advertorials will be perceived as more credible than traditional paid advertisements.

This study hypothesizes that brand mention in magazine articles will be perceived as more credible than advertorials and paid traditional advertisements; that advertorials will be perceived as more credible than paid traditional advertisements; and there will be differences in responses based upon gender, age, and level of education.

The goal of this study is be able to assist a company with the magazine or print media aspect in creating their integrated marketing communications plan. This study plans to help indicate what method: advertisement, editorial, or advertorial, companies should approach if they are not only trying to reach a specific audience but are trying to portray specific characteristics about the brand of their product or service.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Advertising in magazines has existed since magazines were first published. The goal of magazine advertisements are generally more focused on developing and maintaining brand image. Magazines allow access to the intended target audience. In order to target a precise customer base, a company can place their advertisements in magazines which contain editorial content specializing in topics of interests to that customer base. In comparison to other print media, magazines offer relevancy for an increased time period and permit for higher resolution advertisements with improved color selections. On the other hand, magazine advertising can be more expensive and may also require extensive planning to meet deadlines from the magazines, along with restricted accommodations from the magazines in regards to ad placement and format.¹

The issue of credibility arose because as soon as advertising mixed or influenced the news, the readers would not be easily able to differentiate between impartial or paid information. In Scott Angus's "Advertorials: Any unholy marriage", he argues that just the term 'advertorial', an awkward combination between 'advertisement' and 'editorial', is enough of an indication that there is something wrong and distasteful within print media. Angus also argues that print media has started a disconcerting tendency of using advertorials to trick readers in believing that the content has not been paid for and is the same as reasonable and unbiased news content.²

Persuasion Knowledge Model

The Persuasion Knowledge Model, or PKM, reflects how consumer's persuasion knowledge influences their responses to persuasion attempts. Attribution theory accounts of persuasion offer some perception into the capacity of consumers to interpret the actions of advertisers. Within the PKM, the 'targets' are the people for which the persuasion attempt is intended, for example, the consumers. 'Agents' are the people responsible for both designing and constructing a persuasion attempt, for example, the company behind an advertising campaign.

¹ Brassil, Michael. (2010). "Magazine Advertising – Pros and Cons." *WebSiteMarketingPlan.com*.
http://www.websitemarketingplan.com/small_business/magazine.htm.

² Angus, Scott. (2000). "Advertorials: An unholy marriage." Editor & Publisher. 46.

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The targets' assessment of the agents' calculated actions in presenting the information that is created to influence an individual's beliefs, attitudes, decisions, or actions is described as the 'attempt.' This assessment includes not only what the agents view as the message but also the target's view of how and why the agent created, assembled, and distributed that message.³

Ultimately, consumers build up knowledge about how, why, and when a message is anticipated to influence them in order to help them 'cope' with persuasive instances. When an advertising tactic, such as product placement, is recognized to have influential intent, the message of the advertisement will be impacted by how consumers interpret the actions of persuasive agents. When the interpretation varies from the intended message, advertisers run the risk of the consumers "disengage[ing] from the ongoing interaction, draw[ing] inferences of some sort, get[ting] distracted from the message...or discount[ing] what the spokesperson says." ⁴

The Downside of Product Placement

Product placement can be described as a blending of advertising and publicity devised to persuade the target consumers by inconspicuously including branded products into different media sources. Product placement is most effective when the consumer is unaware of the influential objective. The goal of product placement is usually to produce a positive brand image.

In one instance, a consumer's contact to product placement enhances the implicit memory of a brand without automatically increasing explicit memory. This consumer may mistake the increase in implicit memory, or accessibility of a brand, as a preference for the brand. In another situation, a consumer's experience with product placement enhances the explicit memory of a brand. Essentially, consumer's exposure to product placement results in the creation and/or reinforcement of positive brand association.

³ Friestad, Marian and Peter Wright. (1994). "The Persuasion Knowledge Model: How People Cope with Persuasion Attempts." *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21(1), 2.

⁴ Friestad, Marian and Peter Wright. (1994). "The Persuasion Knowledge Model: How People Cope with Persuasion Attempts." *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21(1), 13.

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A study of product placement in the media of television, by Elizabeth Cowley and Chris Barron, provided that viewers with higher in program liking noticed the prominent product placement and in turn generated negative thoughts as a result of that product exposure, damaging brand attitude and association. In conditions where explicit memory for the product placement is low, the positive brand attitude increases.⁵

The Use of Product Placement in Magazines

Magazines can obscure the difference between an advertisement and an article, making it hard for the consumer to correctly determine product placement within a magazine. With current economic times, magazines are under even more pressure to remain profitable. Therefore, it often becomes an easier choice for an editor to bend the guidelines in order to retain advertisers. Product integration has already become an intrusive norm in other media outlets such as television, songs, books and movies. While magazine readers have been for the most part safe from the print equivalent of over the top television moments with invasive product reference, there is continued pressure on the magazine industry to keep up with these product placement norms in order to be able to retain advertisers.⁶

Ultimately, magazine readers are more vulnerable to disguised product placement, which becomes more dangerous as the reader is unable to distinguish an advertisement from an editorial, therefore affecting the way in which they view the information provided regarding a product. Advertorials are becoming more popular as well. Advertorials are typically perceived as more credible than paid traditional advertisements because readers associate these advertisements as editorial content. There is also a growing demand for edit credits, or brand mentions, which is viewed by the reader as even less biased than an advertorial. Some media buyers actually make threats to hold back advertisement pages if their product does not get enough edit credits.⁷

⁵ Cowley, Elizabeth and Chris Barron. (2008). "When Product Placement Goes Wrong." *Journal of Advertising*, 37(1),89-98.

⁶ Fine, J. (2005). "An Onslaught of Hidden Ads." *BusinessWeek*.

⁷ "Under Pressure." (2008). *MediaWeek*. 6.

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The American Society of Magazine Editors has issued guidelines regarding editorial and advertisement content in order to ensure the editorial integrity of magazines. The purpose of these guidelines over the last 20 years has been to guarantee that readers will be able to distinguish the differences between editorial and advertising content within a magazine. In June 2008, the ASME worked to make the guidelines into statements of principle and practice that are easier to comprehend so to avoid advertiser influence or pressure on editorial independence. The chief executive of the American Society of Magazine Editors, Sid Holt, described the purpose of these guidelines as “everyone has to be able to tell the difference between advertising and editorial, and if you can’t tell there’s a difference, there’s problem.”⁸

Magazine readers ultimately face problems in determining the differences between an advertisement and an editorial page. Any advertisement that resembles an editorial story or a feature needs to be labeled as an ‘Advertisement’ or a ‘Promotion’ at the top of each page in distinguishable font. Advertisements should not appear on the front cover or spine of the magazine; companies and products appearing on covers must be only in an editorial perspective as to not advocate advertising. Advertisements cannot be placed immediately before or after editorial pages that demonstrate, illustrate or support the advertised products. Advertiser logos should not appear on editorial pages unless it is in a journalistic context and magazine logos should not appear on advertising pages unless there is a promotion connection or showing off of an editorial reward. Sponsorship of a product must be clearly distinguishable as an advertisement and should not be used in regularly occurring editorial features.⁹

Advertisements appearing as editorials, but not produced by a magazines editor, must be clearly labeled at the top of the page as an ‘Advertisement’, a ‘Special Advertising Section’ or a ‘Promotion’. Advertisers cannot pay or demand placement in return for advertising in order for their products to be displayed and credited in editorial sections. The editorial staff members of a magazine should not be involved in creating advertisements in that magazine.

⁸ Clifford, S. (2009). “Magazines Blur Line Between Ad and Article.” *New York Times*.

⁹ American Society of Magazine Editors. (2008). ASME Guidelines for Editors and Publishers. Retrived April 15, 2009, from <http://www.magazine.org/asme/index.aspx>.

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On the other side, advertising and marketing staff should not use titles that entail editorial association. In order to guarantee that the publications chief editor is able to supervise observance with these guidelines, advertisements and their placements must be submitted to the editor in a timely manner to allocate for crucial adjustments. The consequences of recurring and willful violations of these ASME guidelines are public sanctions and disqualifications from the National Magazine Awards.¹⁰

These guidelines presented by the American Society of Magazine Editors represent a strong attempt to draw a line between editorial and advertisement content in magazines. However, according to editors and publishers that line has become a lot more blurred due “today’s multiplatform, boundary-pushing media world.”¹¹ An increasing amount of advertisements that push the advertisement and editorial boundary are being slipped into magazines. Despite ASME guidelines about advertising placement, advertisements are frequently placed right before or after edit pages where the advertiser is shown or written about. Magazines and advertisers are capitalizing on loopholes of these guidelines. For example, there is no adjacency guideline that says an advertisement about a related product from the same brand page, such shampoo instead of conditioner, cannot be placed next to the editorial page. Even though no advertising is allowed on the front cover of the magazine, there is no guideline against using the issue’s cover model in an advertisement on the back cover. While a magazine can essentially claim they are in compliance with the ASME guidelines, there is still an adverse effect on the reader, fostering confusion between editorial and advertisement content.¹²

Despite ASME guidelines, magazine editors continue to demands from media buyers to loosen their principles, especially when it comes to advertisers’ sponsorships of editorials. While some of the thousands of product-mention credits that appear in editorial pages appear naturally, the cost of a credit in an editorial page is reported to be up into double digits. Many media buyers believe that these guidelines are only suggestions and that magazines need to

¹⁰ American Society of Magazine Editors. (2008). ASME Guidelines for Editors and Publishers. Retrived April 15, 2009, from <http://www.magazine.org/asme/index.aspx>.

¹¹ Moses, L. (2008). “The Thin Black Line.” *Mediaweek*. 10.

¹² Moses, L. (2008). “The Thin Black Line.” *Mediaweek*. 10.

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become equal to other media sources with the current trend of strong product placement. Unfortunately, ASME's attention is presently elsewhere as they focus to strengthen guidelines regarding online editorials. The internet produces the true danger of more invasive forms of advertisement and the ASME must help editors and publishers sustain standards as to what is edit and what is an advertisement.¹³

There are magazines that choose to overstep the guidelines from the American Society of Magazine Editors with values being placed on sustaining their resources and budgets instead of being qualified for the National Magazine Awards. Influences to push the boundaries between advertisements and editorials can be traced to the increase of product placement in television, increasing demand to show Return On Investment, the increasing significance of the relationship between magazine ad revenue and circulation revenue, and the current economic recession.¹⁴

In April 2009, according to Sid Holt, chief executive of the American Society of Magazine Editors, the magazine, Scholastic Parent & Child, blatantly violated the guidelines by placing an advertisement on its front cover. Editor in chief of the magazine, Nick Friedman said that being eliminated from the magazine society's awards was "not a big consideration for us."¹⁵ Risa Crandall, the vice president of Scholastic Parents Media, also supported the decision, saying that Scholastic Inc. expects a 10 percent increase in advertisement revenue as a result of selling advertising for every remaining 2009 issue.

Less obvious violations of the ASME guidelines were demonstrated with an April 2009 issue of ESPN the Magazine. The front cover has a fold-out flap with the words, "You wouldn't settle for an incomplete cover", revealing an advertisement for Powerade.¹⁶ The general manager and editorial director of ESPN publishing, Gary Hoening, believes that while this issue may have come very close to violating the ASME guidelines, it is more important that they are continually looking for new and exciting ways to aid their advertisers.

¹³ Moses, L. (2008). "The Thin Black Line." *Mediaweek*. 10.

¹⁴ "Under Pressure." (2008). *Mediaweek*. 6.

¹⁵ Clifford, S. (2009). "Magazines Blur Line Between Ad and Article." *New York Times*.

¹⁶ Clifford, S. (2009). "Magazines Blur Line Between Ad and Article." *New York Times*.

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An April issue of Entertainment Weekly featured a pocket with a pull-out advertisement for the ABC show “The Unusuals” on its front cover. Scott Donaton, the publisher of Entertainment Weekly, believes that as the ad was distinctive and apart from the front cover, they did not violate ASME guidelines at all, but instead discovered more innovative ways for advertisers.¹⁷

Esquire magazine featured advertising in front cover arrangements in the February and May 2009 issues. The February edition of Esquire featured a peel-back window with an advertisement for the Discovery Channel and the May edition had a “mix and match” cover with advertisements for the History Channel on the opposing side of the pictures. These two examples were not viewed by the ASME to be in violation of their guidelines. The editor in chief of Esquire, David Granger, understands the importance of the ASME guidelines and maintains the principle that there must be a clear benefit to the reader with advertisements.¹⁸

¹⁷ Clifford, S. (2009). “Magazines Blur Line Between Ad and Article.” *New York Times*.

¹⁸ Clifford, S. (2009). “Magazines Blur Line Between Ad and Article.” *New York Times*.

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METHODOLOGY

It was hypothesized that:

1. Brand mention in magazine articles would be perceived as more credible than advertorials, a type of print advertisement designed to resemble editorial content, and paid traditional advertisements (H1);
2. that advertorials would be perceived as more credible than paid traditional advertisements (H2);
3. there would be differences in responses based upon gender, age, and level of education (H3).

This study worked to determine the relationship between the perceived objectivity of brand mention and the message and source credibility along with the resulting product evaluation. Essentially, this study examined whether there is any advantage for companies to pay a promotional fee for their products to be mentioned in a feature article. The perceived credibility and effectiveness of this strategy was compared to that of an advertorials and a traditional magazine advertisement.

Participants

The sample size was approximately 300 students.

Overview

The survey asked the students to judge the product on a basis of eight different categories: attractiveness, believability, honesty/trustworthiness, bias, credibility, expertise, objectivity, and authenticity. All of these claims were based upon a strongly agree to strongly disagree scale. The survey concluded with basic questions regarding the effectiveness of the advertisement, advertorial, or editorial in question, to create a purchase need in terms of the individual and both society as a whole.

There was three different versions of the survey. While all the surveys had the same questions, the differences were in the exhibits per each survey. (See Appendix A) The first version featured an example of an editorial from Cosmopolitan magazine, February 2010 edition. The editorial, entitled “The New Zit Zappers”, displayed four different acne products

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with price, offered based on the characteristics of the product. (See Appendix B) The second version featured an advertorial from Cosmopolitan magazine, November 2009 edition. The advertorial, entitled “Want to Lose Weight” featured Jillian Michaels as ‘America’s Toughest Trainer’ making weight loss simple. This advertorial contained a personal testimony from Michaels and information about her rapid weight loss system as well as information how to order the product. (See Appendix C) The third survey version featured an advertisement of Orajel from Men’s Health magazine, November 2009 edition. This advertisement featured a woman dressed in business formal attire with a content look on her face as it is implied that Orajel eliminated her cold sore before her important presentation. (See Appendix D)

The first characteristic that the survey asked respondents to consider is attractiveness. This question worked to determine the individual’s perception of the editorial or advertisement as aesthetically pleasing. Next, the question about believability took into account if the individual accepted the claim from the editorial or the advertisement as the truth or to consider it likely. The honesty/trustworthiness question had respondents answer whether or not they believed the editorial or advertisement to be reliable and responsible. The next characteristic of bias called into question whether the respondent is under the impression that the editorial or advertisement was uncountable with an inclination or preference for one product or service over a competitor. One question directly asked the respondent to rate the credibility, or the individual’s ability to be believed, of the editorial or advertisement. The concept of expertise is incorporated into a survey question to determine whether or not the respondent believed that the editorial or advertisement offered the advice or opinion of an expert. Following this question of expertise, the respondent indicated if they do or do not find the editorial or advertisement to be just and unbiased and not influenced by emotions or personal prejudices. The final characteristic of authenticity had the respondent judge whether or not the editorial or advertisement had the quality of being genuine and sincere.

It is significant to note that all of these characteristics are either directly or indirectly related to the idea of credibility. By including all eight of these characteristics, it can be ensured that the survey, while still remaining clear, concise and easy to answer, covers all the different

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aspects of credibility. The survey also included a question about the belief of the individual of the effectiveness of the editorial or advertisement, as well as a question that calls the individual into action in regards to purchasing the highlighted product or service. These concluding questions determined how the individual relates the credibility of an editorial or advertisement with the effectiveness or motivation to purchase or use.

Procedure

The survey was administered through both the behavioral lab at Bryant University as well as through the social networking site, Facebook. Initially, students were invited to take the survey at the behavioral lab, with each three students taking a different survey version. This yielded about 25 responses per the three different survey versions. The survey was then distributed through a Facebook event, sending each survey version to a different group of people. This yielded an additional 75 responses for each survey.

Materials

My survey originated from a multitude of different marketing scales. The first scale of cognitive attitude toward the ad measures one's attitude toward some specific advertisement with an emphasis on the beliefs one holds about particular attributes the ad may or may not have. These characteristics would be generally considered as positive and desired. This scale asked the respondent if the ad was believable, interesting, informative, well-designed, easy-to-follow, attention-getting, and clear.¹⁹ The second scale that I incorporated into my survey was regarding the overall attitude toward the advertisement. This scale is intended to measure a person's attitude toward a particular advertisement with questions about whether the advertisement is appealing, attractive, and interesting to the respondent.²⁰ Next, I also included the attitude toward television advertising scale, which measured a person's opinion about television commercials in general. The items within this scale included statements asking the respondents opinion about whether television commercials tell the truth, whether

¹⁹ Homer, Pamela M. (1995). "Ad Size as an Indicator of Perceived Advertising Costs and Effort: The Effects on Memory and Perceptions." *Journal of Advertising*. 24(Winter), 1-12.

Stafford, Marla Royne. (1998). "Advertising Sex-Typed Services: The Effects of Sex, Service Type, and Employee Type on Consumer Attitudes." *Journal of Advertising*. 27(2), 65-82.

²⁰ Lee, Yih Hwai and Charlotte Mason. (1999). "Responses to Information Incongruity in Advertising: The Role of Expectancy, Relevancy, and Humor." *Journal of Consumer Research*. 26, 156-169.

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most television commercials are in poor taste and very annoying, whether television commercials tell only the good things about a product, whether commercials try to make people buy things they don't really need, whether you can believe what the people in commercials say or do, and whether the product advertised the most are always the best to buy.²¹ Also included within my survey was a scale focusing on the believability of the information, which measures the extent to which some specific information that the consumer has been exposed to is viewed as being true and acceptable. The items in this scale ask the respondent to determine their perceptions of the believability, truth, acceptability, and credibility of the information at hand.²² Finally, the effectiveness of the advertisement scale was incorporated as it is intended to measure a person's evaluation of an advertisement that he or she has been exposed to with an emphasis on how informative it is and how influential it could be. This scale includes questions such as rating the overall effectiveness of the advertisement, how realistic the advertisement is, and how effective the advertisement would be in influencing consumers' purchase intentions.²³

These different scales will be created into characteristic items in my survey and evaluated through a Likert scale, asking respondents to either strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, or strongly agree. A 5 represents that the respondent strongly agrees while a 1 represents that the respondent strongly disagrees. A 3 represents that the respondent neither agrees nor disagrees.

The results of the survey should find that a majority of respondents find editorials to be the most credible. A majority of respondents should also conclude that advertorials are more credible than traditional advertisements. The belief is that females may find editorials to be even more credible than males do. There should not be a huge difference in responses by age as there is a very small range of ages within college students.

²¹ Rossiter, John R. (1977). "Reliability of a Short Test Measuring Children's Attitudes Toward Television Commercials." *Journal of Consumer Research*. 3, 179-184.

²² Gurhan-Canli, Zeynep and Durairaj Maheswaran. (2000). "Determinants of Country-Of-Origin Evaluations." *Journal of Consumer Research*. 27(1), 96-108.

²³ Moreau, Page C., Arthur B. Markman, and Donald R. Lehmann. (2001). "What Is It? Categorization Flexibility and Consumers' Responses to Really New Products." *Journal of Consumer Research*. 27(4), 489-498.

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RESULTS

Survey Responses

Survey 1A asked respondents to review an exhibit of an editorial page, specifically focusing on an article, “The New Zit Zappers.” 115 students completed this survey, 60% which of are female and 40% which are male. The average age of the respondents is 24 years.

Survey 1B asked respondents to review an exhibit of an advertisement from Orajel. 108 students completed this survey, 60% of which are female and 40% which are male. The average age of these respondents is 23 years.

Survey 1C asked respondents to review an exhibit of an advertorial from Jillian Michaels QuickStart Rapid Weight Loss System. 95 students completed this survey, 58% of which are female and 42% which are male. The average age of these respondents is 23 years.

Purchase Response

The ninth question of the survey asked the respondent that after viewing the exhibit, if they were in the market for the product(s) mentioned, how many they would purchase. After viewing the editorial exhibit, the respondents of survey A indicated that they would purchase an average of 1 product. After viewing the advertisement exhibit, the respondents of survey B indicated that they would purchase an average of .98 of that product. After viewing the advertorial exhibit, the respondents of survey C indicated that they would purchase an average of .81 of that product.

Analysis of Variance

An analysis of variance was completed with the data set to determine whether there was a difference between the responses on the three different exhibits and if so, to estimate how the data sets were different. Appendix E provides the means per each survey question for three different groups: those who viewed the editorial, those who viewed the advertisement, and those who viewed the advertorial. The Likert Scale was used, coded as ‘Strongly Disagree’ as a 1 through ‘Strongly Agree’ as a 5.

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Question 1 regarding attractiveness and likeability, had a mean of 3.41 for the editorial, 3.33 for the traditional advertisement, and 3.72 for the advertorial. Between the three different groups for survey question 1, the p-value was .012 with $F(2,337) = 4.52$. The only significant difference was between the traditional advertisement and the advertorial groups with a p-value of .019.

With question 2 about believability, the mean of the editorial was 3.25, the traditional advertisement 3.72, and the advertorial 2.83. The p-value between the groups was .000 with $F(2,337) = 26.22$. There was a significant difference between all three groups, with a p-value of .000 between the editorial and the traditional advertisement, a p-value of .000 between the traditional advertisement and the editorial, and a p-value of .006 between the editorial and the advertorial.

For question 3 judging honesty and truthfulness, the editorial had a mean of 2.9, the traditional advertisement 3.42, and the advertorial 2.55. The p-value between the groups was .000 with $F(2,337) = 30.95$. Between the editorial and the traditional advertisement the p-value was .000, between the traditional advertisement and the advertorial the p-value was .000, and between the editorial and the advertorial the p-value was .010.

In evaluating objectivity in question 4, the mean of the editorial was 3, the mean of the traditional advertisement was 3.14, and the mean of the advertorial was 2.73. Between the three groups the p-value was .011 with $F(2,337) = 4.55$. There was only a significant difference between the traditional advertisement and the advertorial with a p-value of .007.

Question 5 about credibility had a mean of 2.95 for the editorial, 3.4 for the traditional advertisement, and 2.68 for the advertorial. The p-value between the groups was .000 with $F(2,337) = 17.90$. The p-value between the editorial and the traditional advertisement was .000 and the p-value between the traditional advertisement and the advertorial was .000.

For question 6 regarding a high level of expertise, the mean of the editorial was 2.9, the traditional advertisement was 3.13 and the advertorial was 3. The p-value between the groups was .169 with $F(2,337) = 1.79$.

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Between the three groups for question 7 judging authenticity, the editorial had a mean of 2.91, the traditional advertisement 3.25, and the advertorial 2.71. The p-value was .000 with $F(2,337) = 9.76$. There was only a significant difference between the editorial and the traditional advertisement with a p-value of .008 and between the traditional advertisement and the advertorial with a p-value of .000.

With question 8 about whether a consumer would be likely to purchase the product(s) mentioned following viewing the exhibit, the mean of the editorial was 3.69, 3.54 for the traditional advertisement and 3.31 for the advertorial. The p-value between the three groups was .008 with $F(2,337) = 4.87$. The only significant difference between groups was between the editorial and the advertorial with a p-value of .010.

There was a significant difference between responses judging the three different exhibits for every survey question except the question regarding the perception of a high level of expertise. This perhaps indicates that there no advantage to one method of brand mention over another when the brand is trying to provide an emphasis on a high level of expertise. While the results did prove a difference in perceived credibility between the three methods of brand mention, the differences were not those predicted within these hypothesizes. The advertisement was perceived to be more honest and true, more objective, more credible and more authentic than the editorial or the advertorial. The advertorial was perceived to be more attractive and likeable than the editorial or the advertisement. The editorial was only found to be the most influential in terms of motivating target consumers to make a purchase following their viewing of that product in an editorial.

In terms of H1, it can be determined, as a result of this study, that advertorials are perceived to be less credible than editorials. However, in terms of H2, advertorials are perceived to be less credible than traditional paid advertisements.

Composite Analysis of Variance

The composite score was the mean of the first eight items within the survey. This composite scale is reliable with an alpha of .82. An overall ANOVA (i.e., omnibus test) revealed that

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the three different groups: the editorial, the traditional advertisement and the editorial, differed on the credibility composite score with $F(2,337) = 12.94$ and $p < .01$.

To pinpoint where the difference emerges between the groups, I conducted three sets of pair wise comparisons. Contrasts showed that editorials, with a composite mean of 3.13, was significantly lower than traditional advertisements, with a mean of 3.37, with $t(236) = -3.29$ and $p < .05$. Traditional advertisements were significantly greater than advertorials, with a composite mean of 2.94. Editorials were also greater than advertorials. (See Appendix F.)

Independent Sample T-Tests

An independent sample t-test was next used to determine if there was a significant difference based on gender response. Appendix G provides the means for each survey question for both males and females.

For question 1 about attractiveness and likeability, the mean for males was 3.27 and the mean for females was 3.61. The p-value between these two conditions was .003 with $F(2,337) = 8.51$.

For question 2 concerning believability, the males' mean was 3.20 and the females 3.33. The p-value was .241 with $F(2,337) = .89$.

For question 3 regarding honesty and trustworthiness, the mean for males was 2.92 and the mean for the females was 2.99. The p-value was .512 with $F(2,337) = .021$.

For question 4 on objectivity, the males' mean was 3.12 and the females' mean was 2.82. The p-value was .010 with $F(2,337) = .780$.

For question 5 with reference to credibility, the mean for males was 2.94 and the mean for females was 3.09. The p-value was .170 with $F(2,337) = .002$.

For question 6 about the high level of expertise, the males' mean was 3.02 and the females 2.98. The p-value was .724 with $F(2,337) = .011$.

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For question 7 concerning authenticity, the mean for males was 2.95 and 2.98 for the females. The p-value was .720 with $F(2,337) = .153$.

For question 8 in regards to the likeliness for consumers to purchase the product(s) mentioned after viewing the exhibit, the males' mean was 3.39 and the females' mean was 3.61. The p-value was .040 with $F(2,337) = 2.491$.

There was a significant difference in responses between gender on the survey questions judging whether the exhibit was attractive and likeable, whether the exhibit was objective, and whether purchases of the mentioned product would occur as a result of viewing the exhibit.

In terms of H3, it can be determined, as a result of this study, that there are a difference in perceived credibility between males and females, most specifically in regards to the characteristics of attractiveness and likeability, objectiveness, and motivation for purchases.

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DISCUSSION

Further studies may be completed in order to determine if there is a difference of perceived credibility of brand mention in magazine editorials, traditional advertisements or advertorials based upon the type of product or service being advertised. It may also be looked into what accompanies the brand mention, as this study only included images of females. Further studies may also determine most specific differences based solely upon age and level of education, instead of just gender.

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CONCLUSION

Ultimately, this study proves that there is in fact a difference between the perceived credibility of brand mention between editorials, traditional advertisements, and advertorials. There is also a slight difference between some aspects of perceived credibility between genders.

The Persuasion Knowledge Model can provide for the findings in this study that traditional advertisements can be perceived as more honest and true, more objective, more credible, and more authentic than an advertorial or an editorial. The frequency in which respondents have been exposed to traditional paid advertisement may provide the traditional advertisement with a greater positive association. Advertorials, on the other hand, attempting to create a blend between an editorial and an advertisement, may be less familiar to the respondents creating a lack of willingness on the part of the consumer to accept and to deem credible or influential. Along these same lines, editorials are also familiar to the respondent but have become to be known as merely opinion pieces.

Recommendations

The recommendations as a result of this study can be most fittingly applied to companies looking to advertise a personal hygiene or health care product to a college student with the average age between 23 and 24 years old. If this type of company is looking for a brand mention that will convey characteristics of honesty and truth, objectivity, credibility, and authenticity, a traditional paid advertisement within a magazine may be not only the most effective but also the most appropriate in terms of the guidelines of magazine advertising. If this company is attempting to use a brand mention that will convey a high level of expertise, there is essentially no advantage between the use of an editorial, a traditional advertisement or an advertorial. The use of an advertorial would be suggested if this company is looking to use a brand mention that is the most attractive and likable. There may be some advantage to the company looking to create a sale as a response to the brand mention, to use an editorial.

There is essentially little difference to consider between gender except for the attractiveness and likeability of the brand mention, the objectiveness and the motivation for purchase following viewing of the brand mention.

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Based on the findings within this study, it would be in the best interest of the previously mentioned type of company to use a traditional paid advertisement to provide a positive and credible brand association with perhaps the combination of an editorial to spark purchases among consumers

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Text

Please take a few moments to review the above exhibit then answer the following questions.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
The content of this exhibit is attractive and likeable. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
The information in this exhibit is believable. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
The information in this exhibit is honest and true. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
The information in this exhibit is objective. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
The information in this exhibit is credible. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
The information in this exhibit has a high level of expertise. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
The information in this exhibit is authentic. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
After viewing this exhibit, many people will want to buy the product(s) mentioned. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

After viewing this, if you were in the market for the product(s) mentioned, how many would you purchase? *

What is your age? *

What is your sex? *

☐

Male

☐

Female

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Appendix B: Exhibit 1A

beautyNEWS The hot trends, tips, and stuff you've gotta try this month

The New Zit Zappers
Like the Criss Angels of skin care, these acne attackers will make your breakouts vanish.

She's got her skin-clearing regimen down.

YOU SEE: A raised, white dot
REACH FOR: Peter Thomas Roth Glycolic Acid 3% Facial Wash, \$32. The gentle acid dissolves the buildup of dead skin that's blocking the pore.

YOU SEE: A small, red bump
REACH FOR: Neutrogena Oil-Free Acne Wash, \$7. Salicylic acid releases trapped oil, while an antibacterial ingredient clears the infection.

YOU SEE: A dark, enlarged pore
REACH FOR: Avon Anew Clinical Advanced Rertexturizing Peel, \$25. Glycolic acid clears away oil, which has been oxidized by air. Less oil means a lighter, smaller-looking pore.

YOU SEE: A large, red swelling
REACH FOR: Clean and Clear Acne Eraser Kit, \$25. A four-step regimen zaps bacteria and shrinks the cystic breakout; a lightening cream (shown here) reduces redness.

SOURCE: DERM SCIENTIST MACRENE ALEXADES

See page 214 for shopping information.

CELEB LOOK
Bump It Up
Red-carpet-strutting stars can't get over the sexy, glamorous bump. Madonna's stylist, Andy LeCompte, explains how to nail it: Part dry, straight hair from above the arches of each brow back to the crown to create a mini ponytail. Twist the top of the tail, and push hair forward to create volume, then secure with a large barrette or bobby pins (an elastic will pull the pouf flat). Tousle remaining strands for a sexy finish.

Madonna's hair hits a high note.

Technicolor Lash Tip
Dab a thin layer of petroleum jelly on lashes, then rub the pad of a clean finger on a standout shade of eye shadow (teal, shown above, looks hot on everyone). Blink up and down against your finger to transfer the color. Such a sexy fringe benefit!

SOURCE: MAYBELLINE MAKEUP ARTIST CHARLOTTE WILLER

TREND
Gloss + Lipstick = Gloss Sticks
Tank tops and eye shadows may look even better layered, but lip gloss over lipstick is one sticky, smeary combo. These hybrids blend vibrant color and shine...without the mess.
(1) IsaDora Crystal Gloss Stick in Bermuda Pink, \$12. (2) Dior Serum de Rouge Lipstick in Raspberry, \$32. (3) YSL Gloss Volupté in Chilled Raspberry, \$30. (4) Shu Uemura Rouge Unlimited Supreme Shine in RD165, \$25.

Maybelline Expert Wear Eye Shadow in Emerald, \$2.99

shu uemura

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Appendix C: Exhibit 1B

I'M GIVING THE BIGGEST PRESENTATION OF MY LIFE.
I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT
A COLD SORE STEALING THE SHOW.
THANKS, ORAJEL.



Instant relief for less than half the price.
Orajel® delivers immediate, triple-medicated relief at a fraction of the cost of the leading brand. So the next time you're facing a cold sore, rely on Orajel. It gets the job done – so you can too.

Orajel®
Real Relief in Real Time.

Use as directed. For more information visit us at www.orajel.com ©2010 Church & Dwight Co., Inc.

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Appendix D: Exhibit 1C

advertisement

Want to Lose Weight?

**JILLIAN
MICHAELS**

**America's TOUGHEST Trainer
Makes Losing Weight SIMPLE!!!**

Before I became a successful TV trainer, life coach and author, I was just another overweight kid with low self-esteem. So believe me, I know what being overweight is all about. But I took the necessary steps to change my life... and so can you. I will do everything in my power to help you, to inspire you, and to provide you with as much information as I can to help you make positive life changes... Your job is to take the first step to a better, healthier life for #1... YOU. Let's begin the journey together.

Over the years I've learned that the two biggest pitfalls to losing weight are: first, not having the willpower to actually reduce your caloric intake (follow a diet plan); and second, not seeing and feeling results quickly enough to motivate you to continue toward a healthier life. My new proprietary weight-control and body-shaping formulations are designed to cut through all the diet jargon and help you get the results you want.

This is where you start to change your life... to get thinner, stronger, and healthier. You'll shed excess pounds and inches by changing your eating and exercise habits. And, you'll find the emotional support that will turn failure into success.

My new formulations can help you make it all possible. Believe me, you can change your life. I know it, I've lived it, I understand it, and I changed it... YOU can too!

NEW!
Introductory Starter Pack

QUICKSTART
Rapid Weight Loss System.

WHAT YOU GET...

- 1 Jillian Michaels Maximum Strength Calorie Control
- 2 Jillian Michaels Maximum Strength Fat Burner
- 3 A FREE BONUS! (One full week MEMBERSHIP to the exclusive Jillian Michaels online weight-loss and fitness program where you will get complete cardio and fitness plans, customized meal plans, daily motivational tips, the ability to track your weight-loss online, and more) All at a special introductory price!!!



ORDER NOW: 1-800-506-1549 or visit JillianWeightLoss.com
100% Money Back Guarantee.*

*Our guarantee: Because no weight-control product or program will work for everyone, all of our fine formulations are backed by a 100% satisfaction guarantee. Simply stated, if you are not satisfied with any Jillian Michaels weight-control formula, just return it to the place of purchase within 30 days.

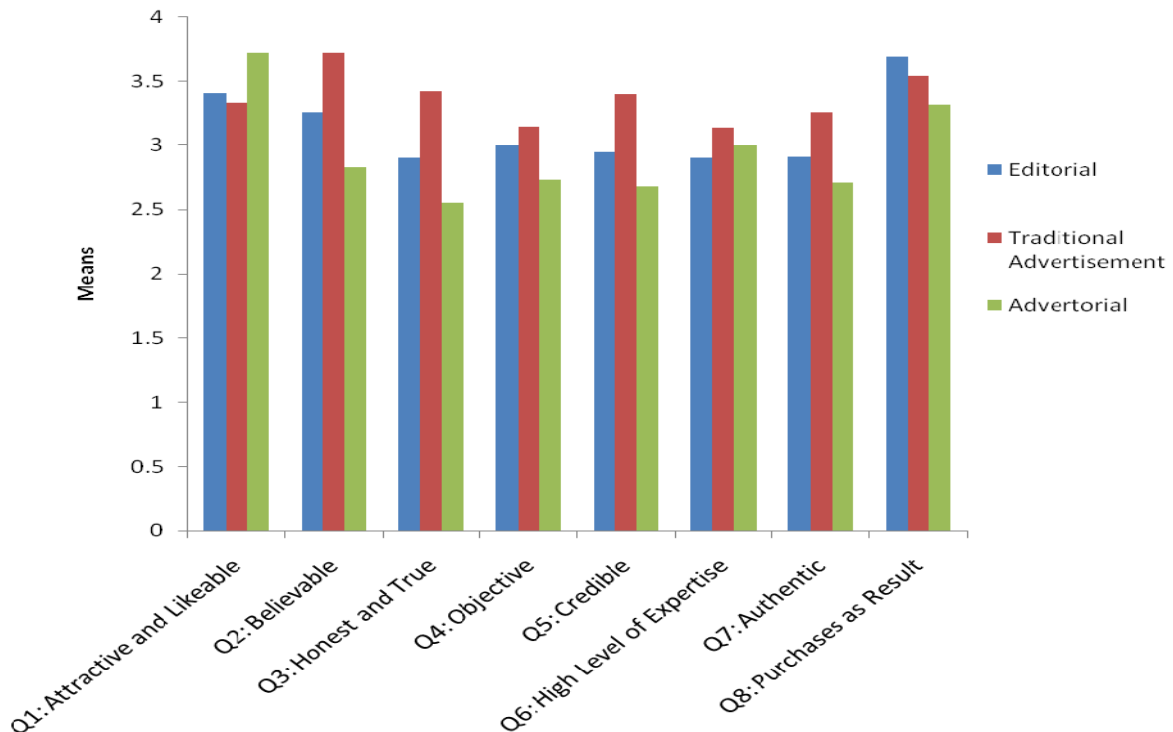
Jillian Michaels' online program is yours FREE for 7 days! You will not be charged during your free trial period. However, valid payment information is required. If you're happy with your online membership, do nothing. Your service will continue uninterrupted, and you will be billed under our standard membership agreement. Online membership is just \$4 a week, billed quarterly (every 13 weeks). The charge will be applied to the same account you provide at sign-up. You may cancel before your free trial ends at no charge, or at any time and you'll receive a refund for the unused portion of your subscription, other than an initial five-week minimum commitment of \$20, which is nonrefundable. Statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. Trademarks are property of their respective owners. Individual results will vary. Use in conjunction with any sensible diet and exercise program.

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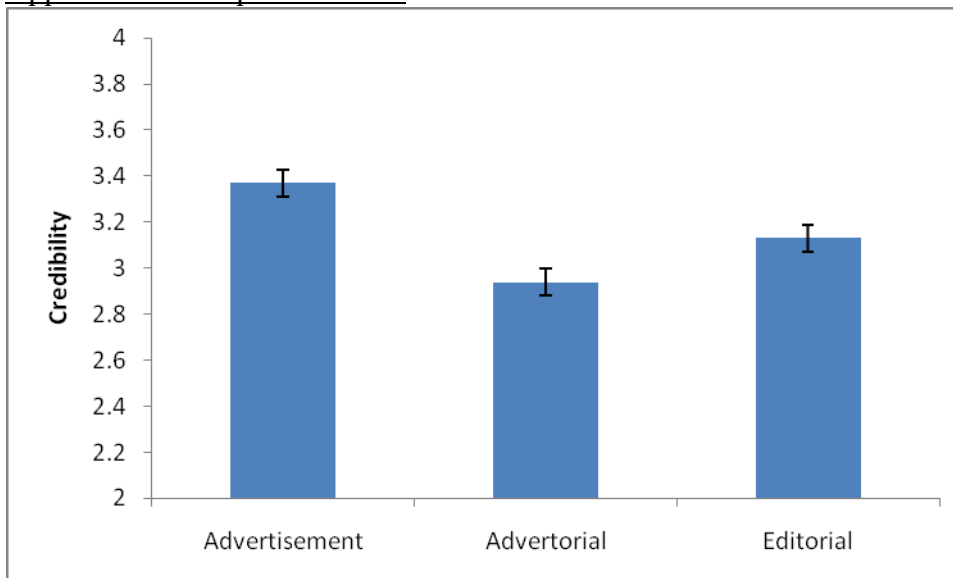
Appendix E: Table 1

Table 1: Analysis ANOVA				
	Means of Groups			
Question	Group 1 - Editorial	Group 2 - Advertisement	Group 3 - Advertorial	Total
Q1: Attractive and Likeable	3.41	3.33*	3.72*	3.48
Q2: Believable	3.25*	3.72*	2.83*	3.28
Q3: Honest and True	2.9*	3.42*	2.55*	2.97
Q4: Objective	3	3.14*	2.73*	2.97
Q5: Credible	2.95*	3.4*	2.68*	3.02
Q6: High Level of Expertise	2.9	3.13	3	3.01
Q7: Authentic	2.91*	3.25*	2.71*	2.96
Q8: Purchases as Result	3.69*	3.54	3.31*	3.53
* = significant difference at $\alpha \leq 0.05$				



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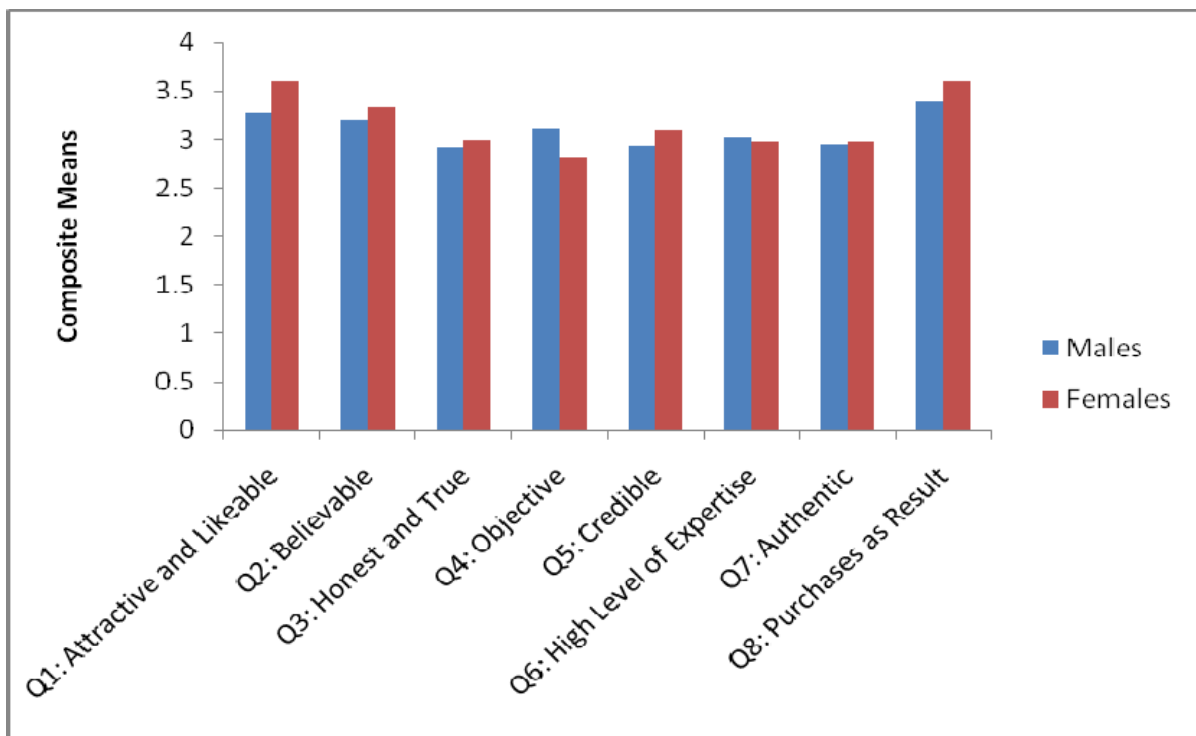
Appendix F: Composite Means



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Appendix G: Independent Sample T-Tests with Gender

Table 2: Independent Sample T-Test		
	Means of Groups	
Question	Group 1 - Male	Group 2 - Female
Q1: Attractive and Likeable	3.27*	3.61*
Q2: Believable	3.2	3.33
Q3: Honest and True	2.92	2.99
Q4: Objective	3.12*	2.82*
Q5: Credible	2.94	3.09
Q6: High Level of Expertise	3.02	2.98
Q7: Authentic	2.95	2.98
Q8: Purchases as Result	3.39*	3.61*
* = significant difference at $\alpha \leq 0.05$		



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