

FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE DIFFERENCE IN PREFERENCES  
FOR USING CELEBRITIES IN ADVERTISEMENTS  
BETWEEN SOUTH KOREA AND THE UNITED STATES

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## Abstract

Celebrity endorsers in advertisements are much more prevalent in South Korea than the United States; in general, approximately half of South Korean television ads feature a celebrity, compared to less than 5% in the United States. Creative directors at advertising agencies in South Korea and the United States were interviewed to study the reasons of this sharp disparity to determine what factors affect the use of celebrities. These interviews, combined with a comprehensive review of existing literature, revealed a variety of factors that affect celebrity usage. Primarily, these include cultural differences between the two countries and differences in consumer attitudes, more specifically, significant dissimilarities in the way celebrities are perceived. Other factors included differences in the relationship between advertising agencies and clients in South Korea versus the United States, as well as differences in the amount of risk incurred with using celebrities. Content analysis in the study focuses on the frequency of celebrity endorsements for the top three advertisers in television commercials for a representative time period, January through September, 2008. Personal interviews include information gathered from interviewing 12 advertising professionals; eight creative directors in South Korea and four in the United States that were conducted from December 2009 through February 2010. In conclusion, the differences in celebrity usage can be attributed to the cultural differences that exist between South Korea and the United States, as well as differences in the way business is conducted in the advertising industry between the two countries.

## **Introduction**

Using celebrity endorsements in advertising is not limited to the United States and appears to be universal. Past research also observes the prevalence of celebrity endorsement strategies in many other countries (Choi, Lee, & Kim, 2005). However, when I came to the United States for the first time, I had the impression that there were a lot more celebrities in South Korean TV commercials than in the United States. I was wondering if my impression was right or wrong and the reasons for these differences. To examine this issue, I conducted two phases of research, a quantitative study, and personal interviews.

In this section, a general definition of a celebrity will be provided, previous research will be discussed and the various aspects of celebrity credibility will be examined.

### **Definition of Celebrity Endorser**

There are many definitions of celebrity. For example, Boorstin famously defined a celebrity as someone who is “known for being well-known” (Boorstin, 1961). A celebrity has also been defined as a person (actor, sports figure, entertainer, politician, etc.) who is known to the public for his or her achievements (Choi et al., 2005). Another definition of celebrity is any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by endorsing it in an advertisement (McCracken, 1989). By another definition, the celebrity endorser is a cultural hero in a cultural context (Yoon et al., 1998). Cultural heroes are defined as “persons, alive or dead, real or imaginary, who

possess characteristics that are highly prized in a society, and thus serve as role models for behavior” (Ferle, & Choi, 2005).

In a similar context, McCracken (1989) argues that celebrities are those who “draw these powerful meanings from the roles they assume in their television, movie, military, athletic, and other careers and each new dramatic role brings the celebrity into contact with a range of objects, persons, and contexts.” In the cultural meaning transfer model created by McCracken, celebrity endorsers should possess shared cultural meanings, imbue products with cultural meanings, and deliver such meanings to the consumers throughout the subsequent processes. Celebrity endorsers are individuals who are symbolic icons, popular in culture, and transfer their symbolic meaning to the products they endorse in advertising (McCracken, 1989).

### **Literature Review**

Past research into celebrity advertising has noted that the prevalence of celebrity endorsement strategies in many countries. Previous study have measured the number of commercials that feature celebrity endorsements, for example, one study found that approximately 25% of U.S. television commercials feature celebrities (Shimp, 2000, as cited by Choi & Rifon, 2007). In another study conducted in 2001, industry sources estimated that one-quarter of all television commercials feature a celebrity (Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001). Multiple studies, conducted in the time range of 1992 to 2002, examining advertising in the Asian region, particularly Japan and South Korea, and found that a high frequency of celebrities being used in Asian advertisements compared to the amount used in the United States.



Commercials in South Korea and Japan employ a large number of celebrity endorsers; celebrities appeared in about half of South Korean commercials and the number was found to be 48% in Japan (Lee, Choi, & Tsai, 2007). The study provided a number of important details regarding celebrity endorsements, namely, a majority of celebrities in South Korean and Japanese commercials were actors or actresses, followed by music artists. The study made the observation that many commercials in South Korea and Japan featured celebrities who act and sing at the same time, a trend that is common among younger celebrities. The study also found that around 25% of South Korean and Japanese celebrities appeared in ads for more than one product. In South Korean ads, more celebrities tended to play the role of an average person and fewer appeared as themselves. In addition, a study of celebrity usage in Canadian markets found that 24% of commercials used endorsers in English Canada, and 29% used celebrities in Quebec (Berneman et al., 2000).

**Aspects of credibility.** Celebrity endorsements have been studied concerning the credibility of the source and attractiveness models, and these have found that celebrities exert their influence on consumers through perceived attributes such as expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1991).

Celebrity involvement enhances the recall of a product (Kahle & Homer, 1985), and also enhances the recall of brand, which is bolstered by the source's attractiveness. The researchers also identified complex interactions between likability, involvement, and gender. When the goal of the advertisement is to enhance consumer attitudes, employing attractive celebrity endorsers is essential (Yoon et al., 1998).

Yoon's study also found "South Korean consumers' responses to celebrity endorsements were favorable and therefore quite similar to previous studies undertaken in the United States." More specifically, among South Korean consumers, celebrities were considered as more credible than non-celebrities and consumer perception of an endorser's credibility was determined to be the most important factor influencing advertising outcome measures.

Research in the U.S. on source credibility has revealed that, in most cases, a highly credible source is more effective than a less credible source in influencing audience attitudes and behavioral intentions (Choi & Rifon, 2007). Celebrity image and credibility are closely related to each other, with the exception of sociability and celebrity credibility perceptions (Choi & Rifon, 2007). The same study found that credibility components (attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) are also important characteristics of a celebrity and thus these may be interconnected with the person's other traits. In addition, a celebrity endorser's credibility, expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness can be used as potential indicators of consumer attitudes toward a specific product and their purchasing intentions (Choi et al., 2005).

**Cultural aspects.** Advertising reflects the prevailing values and norms of a given culture (Han & Shiva, 1994) and research has shown the differences between American and Asian ads in the use of soft sell techniques versus hard sell techniques (Hong, Muderrisoglu, & Zinkhan, 1987; Mueller 1987), appeal types (Cho et al., 1999), and the portrayal of people (Ferle & Choi, 2005). Thus, it can be reasoned that celebrity endorsements in advertising would have a wide range of influences on consumers across

different cultures due to cultural variations such as individualism may differentially impact the importance and strength of credibility in influencing the process (Ferle & Choi, 2005).

**High-context vs. low-context cultures.** In a high-context culture, information is shared widely among people, so communication tends to be implicit and indirect. Communication in a low-context culture is more explicit and direct (Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998). Research showed that Western cultures tend to reflect low-context communication patterns, while Eastern cultures, including South Korea, show high-context styles. More specifically, South Korea is considered to be a collectivist culture with a high-context communication style, while the United States represents an individualistic culture with a low-context communication pattern (de Mooij, 1998; Hofstede, 1984).

**Individualism vs. collectivism.** Several studies have made the common observation that low-context cultures typically include more facts and direct statements in their advertisements while ads in high-context cultures are characterized by symbolism and indirect verbal expressions. As cultural icons, celebrities represent a combination of cultural meanings and images that are often popular in a particular society (McCracken, 1989). Yoon et al. (1998) found that South Koreans were relatively more interdependent than Americans, when independence (individualism) versus interdependence (collectivism) was considered. Yet, additional analysis in the study found that South Koreans showed a stronger tendency toward independence than interdependency.

**Power distance.** Power distance is the extent that people accept unequal distributions of power in society and organizations (Hofstede, 1980). There is a tendency

that the more collective nature a society has, the greater power distance because of the priority placed on agreement among people and on showing respect to superiors or to elders. (Cho et al.,1999). Status or position in society is important values in South Korean culture and they are defined through a complicated hierarchy (Cutler, Javalgi, & Lee, 1995; Kim, 1996). These two studies found that celebrities are often equated with high status because they are widely recognized in society and are considered to exhibit special qualities and power via constant exposure in the media. The studies also suggest celebrities are expected to exhibit a socially desirable and credible image, which, in turn, means they are more effective as endorsers than non-celebrities.

**Self reference theory.** This theoretical area considers the question: How do consumers relate to the celebrity model? The notion of self reference suggests “the totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object” (Rosenberg, 1979). Stated otherwise, self reference is the way people look at themselves and is the reference point for how consumers feel they relate to other images and models. Models in advertisements equate with the consumers’ ideal image; a high probability exists that a positive change in attitude will result in a positive buying decision (Sirgy, 1982). Consumers display a more favorable attitude toward an advertisement if they think it mirrors their own self concept or one which they wish to possess (Mehta, 1999).

**Match-up hypothesis.** Another theoretical area of research concerns the fit or "match" between a celebrity and the product being endorsed, known as the "match-up hypothesis." For example, basketball star Michael Jordan is the ideal celebrity to endorse

Nike athletic shoes. This thinking maintains that endorsements are more effective when the celebrities' images or characteristics match well with the product (Choi, Lee, & Kim, 2005).

Previous studies focused largely on the psychological and cultural aspects of the issue, and further examination needs to be undertaken to assess the practical business and marketing aspects in the context of the advertising industry as a business, as opposed to the social and cultural implications. Also a more definitive assessment needs to be undertaken to determine why South Korea and the United States exhibit so radically different approaches to using celebrity endorsers in advertisements.

### **Research Questions**

This study attempts to address the following questions: a) what are the differences in the frequency of celebrity appearances in television advertisements between South Korea and the United States?, and b) what are the reasons for these differences?

### **Methodology**

This study used the synthesis of content analysis and personal interviews with advertising industry professionals.

### **Content Analysis**

In this paper, two countries, the United States and South Korea, are selected to compare the practice of celebrity endorsements in television commercial advertising.

Television commercial advertising of the top three advertisers in 2008 in the United States and South Korea were analyzed. As shown in Table 1 (see page 14), the top three advertisers in the United States in 2008 were Procter & Gamble, General Motors Corp.,

and AT&T. The top three advertisers were identified by overall advertising billings.

Advertising expenditure rankings for the top three in the United States were taken from Nielsen Wire on October 15, 2009. The top three advertisers in 2008 in South Korea were Samsung Electronics, SK Telecom, and LG Electronics. These rankings were taken from the web site, South Korea Broadcast Advertising Corporation (KOBACO) on October 16, 2009. Information on advertising in TV commercials in the United States was collected from the Coloribus web site, <http://www.coloribus.com> on November 13, 2009, and information on South Korean TV commercials were collected from the TVCF web site, <http://www.tvcf.co.kr> on November 20, 2009.

Table 1

*Top Three Advertisers, United States, 2008 and Top Three Advertisers, South Korea, 2009*

Rank	U.S.	South Korea
1	Procter & Gamble	Samsung Electronics
2	General Motors Corp.	SK Telecom
3	AT&T	LG Electronics

Data was examined for the top three advertisers' TV commercials in South Korea that aired on the three leading national channels, KBS2, MBC, and SBS. The specific broadcast outlets that the TV commercials in the United States were aired on were not identified.

For each advertiser for both countries, information was collected from the web sites indicated above on all commercials, then tabulated to determine how many advertisements featuring celebrity endorsements were broadcast for each advertiser.

AT&T and SK Telecom are in the telecommunications industry, so these two companies are going to be focus of the main comparison in this study.

### **Personal Interviews**

The position of creative director was selected to be the subjects of the interviews because creative directors are the most involved in selecting a celebrity for appearing in advertisements. According to Edorgen and Drollinger (2008), creative directors participated in the celebrity endorsement process 90.8% of the time, the highest among not only advertising agency positions or departments, but also among all entities involved with the process.

I conducted in-person interviews and e-mail interviews with 12 creative directors in South Korea and the United States. All eight interviews in South Korea were in-person and the interviews in the United States consisted of three in-person and one by e-mail. The interviews were conducted between December 2009 and February 2010. (See Appendix A).

Every in-person interview, except for one, was recorded electronically using an iPhone. The e-mail interview was conducted via a question and answer format. Interviews were conducted at either their office or a coffee shop, except for one, which was conducted in a studio. The average length of the interviews varied between about 20-25 minutes. The interviews followed a uniform format of questions allowing for follow-up questions. (See Appendix B).

There were 227 companies on the list of media billings for TV and radio of September 2009 from the Korea Broadcast Advertising Corporation. From these, I

reduced the number to the top 50 agencies and selected creative directors to interview from an equal distribution of large (top 10), medium (11-30) and small (31-50) agencies.

The creative directors interviewed were selected to be representative of a cross-section of advertising agencies ranging from large companies to small companies. For the South Korean interviews, the companies were selected from a list provided by Korea Broadcast Advertising Corporation of the leading agencies based on media billing for television and radio in September 2009.

For the United States interviews, the companies were selected from among a list of the top 25 advertising agencies in Austin, Texas as published in the Austin Business Journal 2009 Book of Lists.

## **Findings**

### **Content Analysis**

Based on the information collected, there were vastly a higher percentage of celebrity-endorsed TV commercials in South Korea than in the United States. As shown in Table 2, among 137 TV commercials aired in South Korea in 2008, more than half of the commercials, 59.1%, feature celebrity endorsers. This number is about the same as observed by Lee et al. (2007).



Table 2

*Percentage of Celebrity Endorsements on TV in the United States and South Korea, 2008*

U.S.			South Korea		
Advertiser	Total Number of TV Commercials	% of Celebrity Endorsements	Advertiser	Total Number of TV Commercials	% of Celebrity Endorsements
AT&T	38	5.2%	LG Electronics	40	82.5%
General Motors Corp.	38	2.6%	Samsung Electronics	34	79.4%
Procter and Gamble	36	0.0%	SK Telecom	63	33.3%
Total	112	2.7%	Total	137	59.1%

Studies conducted in 2000 and 2001 indicate that 25% of TV commercials in the United States feature celebrities; however, this study showed only 2.7% of the 112 TV commercials analyzed feature celebrities among the top three advertisers in 2008.

The top advertiser in South Korea, Samsung Electronics, featured 11 different celebrity endorsers in 34 TV commercials and some celebrities appeared in multiple commercials. Ten celebrities were women and one was a young pop star group. Among the ten women celebrities, six were actresses, and two were singers. This breakdown by profession is similar to the results reported by Lee, et al. (2007) that a majority of celebrities in South Korean commercials were actors or actresses, followed by music artists. The other two celebrities were the Kung Fu Panda animated character and a young female pianist.

For the second leading advertiser in South Korea, SK Telecom, among 63 TV commercials aired in 2008, 20 featured celebrities. SK Telecom mostly featured male celebrities; among 20 people, there was only one actress.

Table 3

*Professions and Number of Celebrities, SK Telecom Television Commercials, 2008*

Profession	Number of Celebrities
Athlete	3
Actor/Actress	7
Fashion Model	1
Singer	1
Actor/Singer	2
Writer	1

As shown in Table 3, SK Telecom featured celebrities who come from a variety of professions. In addition, some television commercials featured multiple celebrity endorsers. Two celebrities acted and sang at the same time as Lee et al. (2007) also observed. One of the celebrity endorsers in an SK Telecom television commercial was also featured in an LG Electronics ad as well.

The third leading advertiser in South Korea, LG Electronics, featured 16 celebrities in the 40 TV commercials the company aired on South Korea's three national television channels. Unlike Samsung Electronics, half of the celebrities were male. Like SK Telecom, LG Electronics featured two different celebrities at once and this pattern occurred three times. LG also featured three non-South Koreans and one, the American

actress Audrey Hepburn, is deceased. Among the other non-South Korean endorsers, one was an actor and one was a fashion model.

All three leading South Korean advertisers used certain endorsers or a specific group of endorsers to promote a specific product over an extended period of time. For example, the actress, Na-young Lee, appeared in advertisements for LG Electronics' washing machines throughout the entire year. Another example, singer/actor Ji-Hoon Jung, also known as "Rain," and the actor, Dong-gun Jang appeared in commercials for SK Telecom from March to December in the sample year. Conversely, all three South Korean advertisers used a single celebrity one time only in certain cases; for example, the ice skater Yu-Na Kim appeared in a single refrigerator advertisement for LG Electronics.

In contrast, the three advertisers examined in the United States used celebrity endorsers in only 2.7% of television advertisements. Significantly, Procter & Gamble, the leading advertiser in the U.S., did not use a single celebrity in any television advertisements included in this survey. However, Samsung Electronics, traditionally the leading advertiser in South Korea, used celebrities in 79.4% of the ads surveyed in 2008. General Motors featured only one celebrity, professional golfer Tiger Woods, in an advertisement for a Buick automobile.

The third American company surveyed, AT&T, used only two celebrities, Olympic swimming star Michael Phelps and film director Martin Scorsese. Conversely, SK Telecom, a leading South Korean telecommunications company in the same industry as AT&T, aired 21 TV commercials that featured celebrities, or one-third of its advertisements in 2008.

In addition, it should be noted that there were no celebrity actors or actresses in U.S. commercials. Finally, it may require further investigation as to why the three companies in the United States exhibited a celebrity endorsement ratio of less than 3% when previous studies have shown much larger ratios.

### **Personal Interviews**

Among different advertising strategies, celebrity endorsements are greatly preferred by South Korean advertisers (Lee, et al., 2007) and this was confirmed through the interviews with all of the creative directors in South Korea. Among the four creative directors interviewed in the United States, only two had experience using celebrities in advertisements thus, additional questions regarding the use of celebrities were not asked.

Generally, the use of celebrities is an integral part of marketing and advertising strategies in South Korea. In fact, advertising industry professionals in South Korea have a common term for using celebrities in advertisements. This method is called the “Big Model Strategy.”

The typical television commercial in South Korea runs for 15 seconds, whereas commercials in the United States typically run for 30 seconds. Creative directors in South Korea pointed out that it is easy to grab consumers’ attention in a 15-second TV commercial rather than telling a story in a 30-second TV commercial. According to Hyun Ju Lee at Welcomm Publicis in Seoul, it is extremely difficult to tell a story to consumers in 15 seconds.

“As a creative director, I don’t need to think about a big, creative idea. I can fill up 15 seconds with a celebrity. That amount of time is too short, so usually I think of one frame, and not a story. Therefore, unless we have a great, simple, and short story, the campaign

has more of a chance to survive in tons of advertisements by using a celebrity that people like.”

Conversely, creative directors in the United States did not have as much to discuss as South Koreans regarding celebrity usage simply because the practice is not commonplace in the U.S. The general view among the Americans creative directors interviewed is that clients generally do not request to use celebrities and creative professionals do not suggest that they use them. In the cases where clients want to use celebrities, the request is not very strong whereas South Korean clients are adamant about using celebrities. Yoon-Ju Hong, of DDB South Korea, for example, stated, “The client pointed at a popular celebrity and literally forced us to use him in the ad campaign.”

Advertisers have the option of not using celebrities in their advertising campaigns. This strategy is desirable to advertisers for many reasons. First, the use of celebrities often does not fit the overall marketing strategy for many products and service categories. Secondly, when advertisers have good creative ideas, they are able to promote the product or service on its own without having to use a celebrity endorser. Thus, the strategy for some companies, especially in the United States, is to let the product or service stand on its own merits. Finally, celebrity endorsements often incur significant budget outlays, and in the current economic climate, companies are dealing with limited advertising funds. Still, companies budget a significant amount of marketing funds on advertising, (See Appendix C).

Furthermore, using celebrities to help sell products and build brand is an essential strategic component of advertising campaigns in South Korea. “In this regard, marketing and advertising practitioners use celebrity endorsement as a promotional strategy in

launching new products, repositioning brands or reinforcing brand images” (Kim & Na, 2007, p. 331). This was confirmed by the comments from two creative directors in South Korea, Yanghoon Kim of Publicis Dialogue and Yoon-Joo Hong of DDB South Korea as well as James Brunk of Kolar in the United States. Choosing an effective celebrity is more difficult in the United States than it is in South Korea because consumers in the United States come from multiple cultural backgrounds whereas consumers in South Korea generally share a common cultural background. According to Yanghoon Kim at Publicis Dialogue, advertisements with a celebrity in the United States may not work because of consumers’ multiple cultural backgrounds in that country. Prentice Howe of Door Number 3 in the United States stated that using a celebrity can have a divisive effect. “Celebrities can be polarizing. Charles Barkley now is in a Taco Bell campaign—I don’t think it’s very good—but some people like Charles Barkley, some people don’t. So you kind of divide your consumer base based on your celebrity.”

The two countries have sharply different celebrity ecosystems, including wide variances in expectations and perceptions of celebrities. For example, celebrities in South Korea are expected to maintain their personal integrity and live as model citizens. Exhibiting good behavior is also a financial motive for South Korean celebrities. According to Bong Jin Kang, LBest creative director, “Compensation from endorsements can be a significant source of their annual income.”

One of the main reasons given for celebrities not being used in the United States was that they may not prove to be reliable citizens, which would damage their credibility as endorsers. For instance, Prentice Howe of Door Number 3 cited Tiger Woods losing

his endorsement deal with Accenture as a prime example of the negative consequences that can occur if a celebrity engages in unacceptable behavior.

In fact, as detailed above in the discussion of power distance, celebrities in South Korea are expected to exhibit good behavior whether or not they are used as celebrity endorsers. Conversely, behavioral expectations for celebrities in the United States are not as high. According to Luke Sullivan, group creative director of GSD&M:

When you cast a celeb, you are risking your clients' good name given that most celebs end up in drug or sex addiction treatment, or in a nightclub with a gun in their elastic pants waistband. When Tiger Woods turned out to be a dirtbag, it cost AT&T literally millions and millions of dollars. And what did they ever get in the first place? Tiger Woods never helped AT&T. Only hurt them (Interview, February 2, 2010).

Worries about potentially adverse celebrity behavior are a primary concern among creative directors in the United States. This factor was most often cited as a key reason for not considering the use of celebrities. At the same time, there have been cases in South Korea where a celebrity has exhibited unacceptable behavior, however worries about poor behavior are not a primary concern among the South Korean advertising professionals interviewed.

For example, in South Korea, at the outset of an advertising campaign, the question asked is, "Who are you going to use for this campaign?," according to Sang Woo Ahn, creative director, Innocean, Seoul, South Korea. Ahn also stated, "On the client side, South Korean companies are constantly under pressure to make a profit in a specific quarter, so they feel compelled to use celebrities in order to help them achieve a quarterly profit, no matter what effect it might have on a brand. This is because using celebrities has a direct effect on sales and achieving profits."

More than one South Korean creative director compared using celebrities to drug addiction. According to Yoon-Joo Hong of DDB:

Also one of my clients is Clean & Clear which is a global brand. They have their own guideline for advertisements. They require two women shown as close friends and who look like real users. So we found girls that looked like students in that age group and have the possibility to become famous in the future. And those girls in our previous campaigns became famous and popular. So many people wanted to endorse this brand. However, once they used Yoon Ah from Girls' Generation (idol group singer) and sales went way up, so they continue to use this strategy. They started looking for well-known celebrities. The brand personality is degenerating. They admit the situation but they cannot avoid it because they already have the morphine.

As with most global businesses, South Korean companies are constantly under pressure to increase sales and turn a profit. According to Sang Woo Ahn, "People in charge of marketing are promoted or laid off based on the sales' result year-by-year. So that's why they are not overly concerned about what happens with their brand, they are much more concerned about reaching their short-term sales and profit targets."

Celebrity usage is so important in South Korea that many business relationships between advertising agencies and their clients are contingent on what celebrities can be provided. Ahn states, "In my recent experience, clients have told us that they will base their decision on what ad agency to use on what celebrity the agency can provide for a specific ad campaign. Therefore, the main thrust of a campaign is not what idea was used or what creative content was created, but on what celebrity was used."

The qualitative interviews also showed strong differences in attitudes about celebrity usage between South Korean creative directors and their counterparts in the United States. In South Korea, where the use of celebrities in television advertisements is commonplace, creative directors expressed regrets about being forced to use celebrities



by the clients. Generally, the interviews revealed that using celebrities decreases the ability of South Korean creative directors to express themselves creatively, thus they tend to have a negative attitude toward using celebrities. According to Hyun Ju Lee at Welcomm Publicis, in Seoul, “We sometimes cannot use the great idea that we come up with because the main character that we come up with cannot be replaced by that celebrity.” Yoon-Joo Hong at DDB South Korea stated, “Using a celebrity in advertisements is shameful for creative directors because we are making advertisements without having a strategy.”

Financial considerations play a role in celebrity usage. The South Korean creative directors interviewed confirmed that the use of celebrities results in increased sales whereas U.S. creative directors said increased sales are not a reason for using celebrities. Celebrities are relatively expensive to hire as endorsers in South Korea and South Korean advertisers use celebrities even when the media budget is not substantial enough to make significant media purchases. According to Hyun Jung Park at Cheil Worldwide, “The case for considering celebrities at the beginning of the planning stage is if the media budget is too small to make a big impact on the campaign.” According to Yoon-Joo Hong at DDB South Korea, “We recommend using celebrities when they have a limited budget.”

In the United States, there are some practical reasons for not using celebrities. For example, Prentice Howe said that the reason for not using a celebrity is due to the fact that their time is limited and it is difficult to schedule them to make a commercial in a timely manner. “I think, the main reasons typically are the tight time frame. And to be

able to secure a celebrity in time, it is just difficult to do it, usually.” Hyun Jung Park at Cheil Worldwide described how hard it is to arrange schedule for celebrities in the United States, “It is very difficult to get into contact with top celebrities and arrange to schedule them. For example, it took a really long time to get a response from Pierce Brosnan because he was in the middle of shooting a movie.”

Similarly, in South Korea it is difficult to arrange a schedule to use a celebrity, but advertisers in South Korea prefer to do so anyway. Hyun Ju Lee at Welcomm Publicis, South Korea stated, “Although we pay a lot of money, usually \$600,000 to \$750,000, to them, they are not accommodating to arrange the schedule.”

Although South Korean creative directors prefer to use celebrities for their advertising, sometimes this did not work, as was cited in several examples. Creative directors said that one problem with using celebrities is that consumers have a tendency to remember the celebrity, but not the brand or product. In some cases, creative directors said that in cases when budgets are extremely tight, they cannot even consider using a celebrity because of the costs involved. Also, Hyun Ju Lee of Welcomm Publicis said that when a competitor is using a celebrity, their clients go in the opposite direction and choose to not employ a celebrity endorser.

Taken together, a recurring theme in the interviews with South Korean advertising industry professionals is that companies use celebrities because doing so produces results. The basic marketing strategy in many cases at the beginning of advertising campaigns is to choose a celebrity, and that manner of doing business is expected from both the

advertiser and the agency. Furthermore, all of the South Korean creative directors interviewed are expecting that this marketing strategy will continue in the future.

## **Discussion**

### **Content Analysis**

As evidenced in the data presented, celebrity usage is much more prevalent in South Korea than in the United States. Although the top three advertisers by billings were represented from each country, these advertisers come from very different product categories, except for AT&T and SK Telecom. Thus, a limitation of this study is that it may not be representative of all product categories and industries, thus may not provide the most desirable comparison. However, the findings revealed that there were more celebrity endorsements in South Korea than the United States. There are significant differences in the way the public views celebrities between South Korea and the United States and the celebrity ecosystem is sharply different between the two countries. For instance, celebrities in South Korea are held to a much higher standard, which is an essential attribute based on the concept of power distance (Cutler, Javalgi, & Lee, 1995; Kim, 1996). The differences in perceptions of celebrities are one of the underlying factors for the large difference in the use of celebrities.

### **Personal Interviews**

The wide variance in the use of celebrities can be attributed to cultural differences between South Korea and the United States. For example, there is a wide gap between the public behavior of celebrities in South Korea and the United States. With respect to preferences for using celebrities, in South Korea, the mindset of the client is that a

celebrity will more than likely be employed to promote a product or service, whereas in the United States, clients typically do not choose to use a celebrity when developing an advertising campaign. For example, Luke Sullivan of GSD&M said, “Fortunately, no client has insisted I use a celebrity on TV.” Moreover, in South Korea, the process of executing an advertising campaign is largely driven by the client, whereas in the United States, strategy is often driven by the advertising agency.

Budgeting and financial considerations also play central roles in employing celebrities in both South Korea and the United States. In the U.S., celebrities are perceived as expensive and not essential to marketing strategies, whereas in South Korea, celebrities are also seen as expensive, but the perception is that advertisers can get a substantial return on their investment. The most popular celebrity endorser currently in South Korea is figure skater, Yu-Na Kim, and sales results show that using a celebrity in advertising in this case, works.

Table 4.

*Yu-Na Kim's "Fairy Tale on Ice" Takes Over the Advertising Industry.*

Brand	Lac Vert	Hyundai Motors	Ivy Club	P&G Whisper	KB Bank	LG Saffran	LG Dios	ESL Low fat & Calcium milk
On Air	2009- 01-19	2009- 01-24	2008- 12-03	2008- 10-28	2008- 07-12	2008- 05-19	2008- 05-16	2008- 05-22
Execution cost	\$239,090	\$765,454	\$509,090	\$570,909	\$120,090	\$213,636	\$898,181	\$144,272
CPCM (Cost per Consumer's mind)	\$0.80	\$0.55	\$0.55	\$0.67	\$0.44	\$0.36	\$1.45	\$0.34
ROI (Return on Investment)	2.88	2.92	2.68	2.29	3.72	4.18	0.74	3.16

A common perception in the United States is that celebrity endorsers in South Korea are much less expensive in South Korea than in the U.S.; however, this is not the case. According to several creative directors in South Korea, the cost for using top celebrities in South Korea, such as the leading models, ranges from \$600,000 to \$750,000. Surprisingly, the cost for using celebrities in the United States, are not as high. Hyun Ju Lee at Welcomm Publicis stated that South Korean celebrities are more expensive to hire than foreigners are if we assume that they are at the same level. According to Sang Woo Ahn at Innocean, "One time we contacted a worldwide recognized American celebrity and the cost was about same as a top South Korean model, so I was really surprised."

In the United States, creative directors did not cite increased sales as being a reason for using celebrities. Rather, they generally cited increased brand recognition and the desire to associate a particular product with a celebrity. For example, Prentice Howe, creative director at Door Number 3, stated, “The pros are I think instantly you kind of elevate your brand to the status of whoever the celebrity is. If you’re a smaller brand, like Alec Baldwin, he helped introduce what was that new brand that came out, Hulu.”

### **Limitations and future research**

As evidenced in the data presented, celebrity usage is much more prevalent in South Korea than in the United States. Although the top three advertisers by billings were represented from each country, these advertisers come from very different product categories, except for AT&T and SK Telecom. Thus, a limitation of this study is that it may not be representative of all product categories and industries thus may not provide the most desirable comparison. The three companies selected also may not be a large enough sample to provide a definitive assessment of the use of celebrity endorsers across the full spectrum of marketing and advertising within the respective countries. Also, only TV commercials from 2008 were analyzed, and although a full year is representative of recent advertising trends, it cannot be applied to all advertising in a broader historical context. Also, it cannot be determined with full assurance if the television ads analyzed in the study included all of the ads for each company that was broadcast for the given year.

Information presented from the interviews detailed the many reasons for using celebrities and contrasted the differences between celebrity usage in South Korea and the United States. A limitation of the qualitative research is that the interviews did not consist

of the optimal representation of advertising agencies across both countries. The interviews of South Korean creative directors were generally with companies that oversee national advertising campaigns and were among the leading companies in the country. Conversely, the interviews in the United States were with creative directors from relatively small advertising agencies except GSD&M in a mid-size city, Austin, Texas. However, many of the creative directors had work experience in larger cities such as New York, Los Angeles and Detroit.

Further research is required to fully understand the reasons why celebrities are used more frequently in advertisements in South Korea. For example, this study includes interviews with only advertising agency professionals, so future research could also include interviews with professionals on the client side, such as a marketing director. Also, representatives on the celebrity side such as an agent could be interviewed as part of future research. Some of the South Korean creative directors mentioned that the South Korean media environment is different from the U.S. and the South Korean entertainment industry is closely related to advertising. In addition, further research could include how the media environment is different and how the relationship between advertising and entertainment industries is different between the two countries to understand the reasons why celebrities are used more frequently in advertisements in South Korea.

### **Conclusion**

The use of celebrities in advertisements in the United States and South Korea clearly show that celebrities are used by advertisers much more frequently in South Korea than in the United States. More than half of the top three advertisers in South

Korea use celebrities whereas less than 3% of the top three advertisers in the United States use celebrities. The primary factors that affect the use of celebrities in two countries can be attributed to: (a) cultural differences between the two countries that result in differing consumer attitudes toward celebrities; (b) differences in the amount of risk incurred with using celebrities; (c) the desire of South Korean companies to employ a “Big Model Strategy” because of the positive return on investment that using a celebrity delivers; (d) the difference in the typical length of television advertisements; and (e) differences in the relationship between advertising agencies and clients between the two countries.

To be more specific, with respect to preferences for using celebrities, in South Korea the mindset of the client is that a celebrity will more than likely be employed to promote a product or service, whereas in the United States, clients typically do not choose to use a celebrity when developing the advertising campaign. In addition, in South Korea, the process of executing an advertising campaign is largely driven by the client whereas in the United States, strategy is often driven by the advertising agency. For example, in South Korea, at the outset of an advertising campaign the question asked is, “Who are you going to use for this campaign?” according to Sang Woo Ahn, creative director, Innocean, Seoul, South Korea. In the United States, using a celebrity is not typically considered when developing a marketing strategy.

There are also great differences in the relationship between the client and the advertising agencies. In the United States, there is better cooperation between the client and the agency than there is in South Korea, where clients have considerably more power



and influence on advertising strategy. To illustrate this, many of the large companies in South Korea such as Samsung, LG, and Lotte have their own in-house agencies, because in many cases, clients prefer not to be told how to develop advertising strategies.

According to Hyun Ju Lee at Welcomm Publicis, “I think there are cultural differences between companies in the East and West when it comes to the relationship between the client and the advertising agency.”

Cultural differences on a larger scale also play a factor in the decision to use or not use celebrities. For example, choosing an effective celebrity is more difficult in the United States than it is in South Korea because consumers in the United States come from multiple cultural backgrounds whereas consumers in South Korea generally share a common cultural background.

There is also a significant difference in consumer attitudes toward celebrities between the two countries. Celebrities are held in much higher regard in South Korea, and it is much more common to see celebrities in advertisements, whereas in the United States, celebrities are often perceived to not be model citizens.

There are also considerable differences in amount of risk an advertiser takes when employing a celebrity endorser between the two countries. In all of the interviews with South Korean creative directors, the behavior of celebrities was never mentioned as a limiting factor in considering using a celebrity, whereas multiple creative directors in the United States made reference to potential risks in employing celebrities due to potential behavioral issues.

In conclusion, the large disparity in the usage of celebrities between South Korea and the United States can be attributed to many factors, including cultural differences, differing consumer attitudes, and differences in the way business is conducted between the two countries

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## Appendix A

## Interview Information

Interviewee	Agency	Date	Interview Method	Interview Location	Electronic Recording?
Yanghoon Kim	Publicis Dialogue, Seoul, South Korea	Dec. 21, 2009	In-person	Office	No
Bong Jin Kang	LBest, Seoul, South Korea	Dec. 22, 2009	In-person	Coffee Shop	Yes
Hyun Ju Lee	Welcomm Publicis, Seoul, South Korea	Dec. 24, 2009	In-person	Studio	Yes
Sang Woo Ahn	Innocean Worldwide, Seoul, South Korea	Dec. 31, 2009	In-person	Office	Yes
Jae Hoon Kim	KORAD, Seoul, South Korea	Jan. 5, 2010	In-person	Office	Yes
Beak-Hyun Lee	Hakuhodo Cheil, Seoul, South Korea	Jan. 6, 2010	In-person	Office	Yes
Hyun Jung Park	Cheil Worldwide, Seoul, South Korea	Jan. 6, 2010	In-person	Coffee Shop	Yes
Yoon-Joo Hong	DDB, Seoul, South Korea	Jan. 15, 2010	In-person	Office	Yes
Luke Sullivan	GSD&M, Austin, TX	Feb. 2, 2010	E-mail		
Jay Suhr	T3, Austin, TX	Feb. 4, 2010	In-person	Office	Yes
James Brunk	Kolar, Austin, TX	Feb.11, 2010	In-person	Coffee Shop	Yes
Prentice Howe	Door Number 3, Austin, TX	Feb. 24, 2010	In-person	Office	Yes

## Appendix B

### Interview Questions

1. First, have you used a celebrity in an advertisement?
2. What are the main reasons for using, or not using celebrities?
3. Do you think using a celebrity is effective?
4. Is there any particular product category that you believe celebrity advertising works better?
5. Have you ever suggested using a celebrity before, and if yes, did the client like the suggestion?
6. Has a client suggested using a celebrity, and if yes, how did it work?
7. What are the pros and cons of using celebrities?
8. Do you have any other comments, thoughts, or examples of using celebrities in advertisements?



## Appendix C

*Top Ten Advertisers in 2008 (January - September) in the United States and South Korea*

Rank	South Korea Advertisers	TV Spending In USD		US Advertisers	Traditional Media Spending	
1	Samsung Electronics	\$52,067,538	18.53%	Procter & Gamble Co	\$2,342,319,397	21.00%
2	SK Telecom	\$46,351,871	16.50%	General Motors Corp	\$1,441,747,399	13.00%
3	KT Freetel	36,053,813.9136364	12.83%	AT&T Inc	\$1,317,893,377	12.00%
4	LG Electronics	\$35,022,720	12.46%	Verizon Communications Inc	\$1,125,700,512	9.99%
5	KT Marketing Strategy HQ	23,682,598.4136364	8.43%	Johnson & Johnson	\$1,059,109,138	9.40%
6	Hyundai Motor Comapny	19,543,407.7318182	6.96%	Time Warner Inc	\$878,355,332	7.80%
7	Himart	18,605,385.25	6.62%	Toyota Motor Corp	\$819,377,026	7.27%
8	Kia Motors Corporation	17,542,018.4772727	6.24%	General Electric Co	\$807,869,688	7.17%
9	LG Telecom	17,169,254.9681818	6.11%	Ford Motor Co	\$742,708,529	6.59%
10	CJ Cheiljedang Corporation	14,942,646.6454545	5.32%	Pepsico Inc	\$730,503,931	6.48%
	Total	\$280,981,254.02	100.00%	Total	\$11,265,584,329	100.00%

## Appendix D

### Interview with Luke Sullivan at GSD&M, Austin, TX by email

#### 1. What are the main reasons for not using celebrities

First, you have to ask, “why?” why should a brand use a celebrity? If you were working for Nike, that makes a lot of sense because there is a reason to say that Michael Jordan likes these shoes for basketball because he can corner faster on them. That is a good reason to use a celebrity. Here the celebrity is relevant to the product. And they are believable. Here I think it works. I can’t think of another brand (off the top of my head) That has consistently used celebs to their advantage. Just Nike. I’m sure you will come across one or two others, possibly. But sitting here today, not even one occurs to me.

Well, let me take that back. I see celebs used to some effect when they are used as comic props. I am thinking of all the great sports center stuff and some ESPN sporting stuff where the sports stars ham it up in the commercials. Where even their lack of acting skills are used to good effect. But here they are used only as comic foils.

#### 2. Do you think using a celebrity is effective?

As I wrote above, yes, if the celeb is directly relevant and believable. Famous golfer endorses clubs. Fine. I get it.

#### 3. Is there any particular product category that you believe celebrity advertising works better?

Obviously I clearly think that sports celebrities work for sporting goods, sport channels, NFL, etc.

#### 4. Do clients request that you use a celebrity?

No. Fortunately no client has insisted I use a celebrity on TV. I have had several clients ask if they could get a celebrity voice over, which I think is a supreme waste of money. Very very few celebs have a recognizable voice once you strip away their image and rely on voiceover alone.

#### 5. Have you ever suggested using a celebrity before, and if yes, did the client like the suggestion?

No.

6. What are the pros and cons of using celebrities?

When you cast a celeb, you are risking your clients good name given that most celebs end up in drug or sex addiction treatment, or in a nightclub with a gun in their elastic pants waistband. When Tiger Woods turned out to be a dirtbag, it cost AT&T literally millions and millions of dollars. And what did they ever get in the first place. Tiger Woods never helped AT&T. Only hurt them.

7. Do you have any other comments, thoughts, or examples of using celebrities in advertisements?

Nope, sorry. They mostly suck.

\*\* Luke Sullivan already mentioned that he has never used celebrities in advertisements before when I request interview.

## Appendix E

## Interview Transcript Sample

Prentice Howe, Creative Director, Door Number 3

Interview conducted at Door Number 3 office in Austin, Texas, February 24, 2010

Ji Eun: First, have you used a celebrity in an advertisement?

Prentice: No, actually, I have not.

Ji Eun: What were the main reasons for not using a celebrity?

Prentice: I think, the main reasons typically are the tight time frame. And to be able to secure a celebrity in time. It is just difficult to do it, usually. There are a lot of roadblocks getting to the celebrities. The other thing is budget. Not having the funds to be able to pay for them. That's typically what stopped us in the past.

Ji Eun: Do you think using a celebrity is effective?

Prentice: I think it can be really good for credibility. Actually, State Farm right now is using LeBron James. I think it has probably worked well. He is a nice presence, great tone, good voice, and comes across as very credible. Travelocity, William Shatner. That can be good. I think the downside and the thing to be careful about is tying your brand to the celebrity too much. If a celebrity does something out of character, like Tiger Woods and Accenture. Then all of a sudden, your entire campaign and everything that you invested and put money towards just crumbles and you don't have any kind of identity. I think it's, I am not a fan of tying a brand solely only to a celebrity.

Ji Eun: Why?

Prentice: I think it's too many eggs in one basket solely, or it's too much relying on them and their character and making them to stay clean and out of trouble. I also don't think it's incredibly inventive. It is hard sometimes to be creative and have a creative message that really resonates with celebrities. I think it has been done well before sometimes. If you look at even Sports Center and the way they do advertising with LeBron James and any of the professional athletes. It's been done creatively and it's funny. It's not about one celebrity. They use them in and out and it's great. But it's still Sports Center. It's not just one person that they rely on. So I think that's probably good in terms of using them. The other thing is, they can be polarizing. Charles Barkley now is in a Taco Bell campaign—I don't think it's very good—but some people like Charles Barkley, some people don't. So you kind of divide your consumer base right there immediately based on your celebrity.

Ji Eun: Is there any particular product category that you believe celebrity advertising works better?

Prentice: I don't know. I don't necessarily think so. I think maybe with the older market place, like the elderly market place, I think sometimes celebrity is good for credibility. I think they rely on that a lot more. They rely on the word of friends and families and doctors. So if you look at something like health care for older people, I think maybe there is like Bea Arthur from "The Golden Girls." And she did some things, I can't think of all the names that I have seen endorsing the product. That's probably one case where it helps.

Ji Eun: Have you ever suggested using a celebrity before to clients?

Prentice: I never have. No, I never have.

Ji Eun: Has a client suggested using a celebrity, and if yes, how did it work?

Prentice: Yes, Clients have. Clients do all the time. I think that they throw out names. But I don't think they consider necessarily what goes into securing them on tight time frames. I think what happens with the Texas Rangers I think that they would like to see when we're working with them, Nolan Ryan in their commercials. He is now the team president and he is a celebrity. That's been the case. And also they like to use their own players in the way that they are celebrities. It's more fitting to their brand because that's their product. So I don't know that I have ever had a client suggest a celebrity that does not relate specifically to what their category is.

Ji Eun: What are the pros and cons of using celebrities?

Prentice: The pros are I think instantly you kind of elevate your brand to the status of whoever the celebrity is. If you're a smaller brand like Alec Baldwin he helped introduce what was that new brand that came out oh, Hulu. So Hulu was new in the market and they got Alec Baldwin and they also got Seth MacFarlane the creator of Family Guy. If you start using those guys with an unknown brand, all of a sudden, the brand becomes credible, and kind of bigger than life, and that's really good. So just believability if you pick the right person and they're a trusted person, then all of a sudden, the brand becomes trusted too. And I think that's really good. The downside like I said, is timing, and making it happen, and the money that goes into it. And is that money better spent somewhere else maybe? Or can you put it more into media and then advertise even more? These are things that have to be weighed. And then lastly, the biggest con is being too tied to one person, and then having them do something that's embarrassing and then you kind of have to start over.

Ji Eun: Do you have any other comments or thoughts about celebrities?

Prentice: No. I think it would be fun to do that with one of our campaigns. I think, the ones that I admire, use them creatively. I don't like, I think they kind of fall flat, celebrities just standing there and talking about a product. I like it more when they are incorporated into the script. You can kind of use their own personality and bring it out. So I think that's a great way to use celebrities. I don't what's done in Korea, how they are used, but I really prefer where they're kind of intergrated into some kind of story.

## Appendix F

*Interview Example Seoul, South Korea in Korean*

Yoon-Joo Hong, Creative Director, DDB, Seoul, South Korea  
 Interview conducted at DDB office in Seoul, South Korea on January 15, 2010

이지은: 빅모델 써보신 적 있으시죠?

홍윤주: 네

이지은: 빅모델 전략이 굉장히 많이 쓰이는데, 그이유가 뭐라고 생각하세요?

홍윤주: 가장 큰 이유가 우리나라에서는 일단 15초 환경이고, 인구가 작는데 비해서 연예사업이 발달해있고 사람들의 관심사가 딱 정해져 있어서 그런 것 같아요. 짧은 시간내에 빨리 효과를 볼 수 있는 방법이고, 그리고 신뢰가 없던 제품도 그사람들로 인해서 신뢰를 얻는 경우도 있고. 모르핀 효과를 주잖아요 빅모델이..그래서들 선호하는게 아닌가 싶어요. 그리고 검증이된 사례가 많으니깐 실패가 없고 한큐에 엮어갈 수 있는 가장 손쉬운 방법이고, 사실 크리에이티브로써는... 크리에이티브로써의 욕심으로는 빅모델을 쓰는 순간 크리에이티브의 절반은 접고 가야 되잖아요, 모델에 기대는 것이기 때문에..하지만 권한 수밖에 없어요, 실제로 검증이 되어서..그리고 예산이 적을수록 많이 권한 편이에요. 우리 입장에서는.. 왜냐하면 저는 또 물량을 이기는 크리에이티브는 없다고 보거든요, 그래서 일단 틀면 나온다 하면 새 뇌가 때문에.....올레나 쇼, 쿡 같은거는 크리에이티브적으로 유니크 하기도 하지만 그게 물량이 뒷받침되지 않고는 결코 성공 하기 힘들어요. 일단 틀면 나오니깐, 도배가 되어 있으니깐... 상대적으로 매체량이 적고 예산이 적다 하면 한번을 봐도 기억에 남을 만한, 누가 나오는걸로 이걸로 가는게 IMC로 묶기도 편하고 그래서 예산이 아주 작을때 말고 예산이 아주 적으면 모델료로도 못쓰니깐 안되고, 예산이 어중던 경우에는 많이 권한죠. 신규 브랜드 런칭이라던지 이런 경우에는 유리한 경우가 있어요.

이지은: 혹시 그러면 빅모델을 아예 쓰지 않은 경우도 있었나요? 그런 경우는 어떤 경우였고 왜 그러셨는지...

홍윤주: 그런 경우에는 주로 해외 브랜드라서 그 브랜드의 Personality가 확실하게 정해져 있는 경우, 오히려 모델의 성격이 그 브랜드를 해친다고 생각하는 때가 있어요. 그리고 빅모델을 쓸 때 리스키한 부분도 있죠. 사생활 때문이라던가.. 그 브랜드의 캐릭터가 확실 할 경우에는 빅모델이 좀 걸리적 거릴때가 있어요. 빅모델은 자기가 스스로.. 개 모델의 이미지가 상품의 이미지를 대표하는 것이기 때문에, 브랜드

로써는, 롱텀으로 봤을때 안좋죠. 사람이 브랜드가 되는 경우는 좀 위험할 때가 있죠. 그래서 long-term 전략으로 봤을 때 그럴때 좀 독이 되죠..

이지은: 그럼 빅모델을 쓰는게 효과적이라고 생각하시나요?

홍윤주: 제한적인 상황에서, 일부 상황에서는, 다 그렇다고는 보지 않아요.

이지은: 혹시 그러면 빅모델을 주로 쓰는 상품군이라던지 아니면 아예 쓰지 않는 상품군이 따로 있나요?

홍윤주: 상품군이 따로 나뉘져 있기 보다는, 화장품이나 샴푸같은 이런 beauty 제품들은 거의 100%라고 봐야죠. 그사람들이 제품의 효능 효과를 알려주는 얼굴이 되버리니깐 just endorsement가 아니라 user로 나오잖아요. 실제로 개 피부를 보면서 aspiration을 느끼고 그런 역할들이기 때문에 거의 must이구요. 오히려 걸리적 거리거나, 방해가 된다고 생각되는 것들은 통신사 제품인 것 같아요. 왜냐하면 굉장히 트렌드가 빨리 빨리 바뀌기 때문에 모델의 이미지가 못따라가는 것 같아요. 상품도 계속 바뀌고 정말 단타로 치고 빠져야 되기 때문에, 언제 어떻게 상황이 바뀔지 모르고 라이프 사이클이 굉장히 짧기 때문에 빅모델의 이미지가 좀 리스키 할 수가 있죠..오히려 새로운 포맷이나 형식이나 그 시대의 담론을 가지고 이야기 하는게 낫지, 모델에 기대다는건 조금 위험할 수 있는 것 같아요.

이지은: 그럼 빅모델을 쓰는 것을 광고주들이 선호하나요?

홍윤주: 그것도 케이스바이케이스죠. 저희회사 클라이언트같은 경우는, 비너스는 빅모델 없이는 상상할 수가 없죠. 그런데 원래 비너스가 빅모델을 쓰지 않았어요. 그런데 우리회사에 오면서 2000년쯤부터 쓰기 시작했거든요, 그런데 그걸로 재미를 봤어요. 그리고 역으로 제 클라이언트 중에 클린엔클리어가 있거든요, 글로벌 브랜드 인데, 클린엔 클리어는 가이드라인이 있어요. 그래서 두명의 여자가 꼭나와야 되고, 둘이 베스트 프랜드여야되고, 그리고 리얼 피플로 보여야 되고 뭐 이렇게 있는데, 실제로 그래서 고나이에 뜰만한 아이를 찾아서, 실제 학생처럼 보이는 찾아서 뽑았어요. 그랬었는데, 개네들이 이 모델을 하면서 뜰 케이스가 많았어요. 그래서 많이들 하고 싶어해요. 이 모델을 하고 나면 뜰다는 생각 때문에...그런데 소녀시대 윤아를 쓰면서 애네가 매출이 확 올라간가요. 소위 빅모델 맛을 본거예요. 그러면서 이미 뜰 애들을 찾기 시작했어요. 그러면서 브랜드가 변질이 되가고 있는데, 본인들도 인정을 해요..그런데 뭐 이미 모르핀을 맞아서 그걸 못 버리는 거예요.

홍윤주: 뉴트로지나도 약간 좀 마이너 모델을 쓰다가 요즘은 무조건 스타.그래서 요즘 황정음 얘기도 나오더라구요.



이지은: 미국광고 많이 보셨나요? 미국은 빅모델이 잘 안나오는데 혹시 왜그러는지 생각해보신적 있으신가요?

홍윤주: 미국은 매체환경도 다르고, 땅덩이도 크고, 좀 다른 것 같아요. 우리나라는 땅덩이도 작고 전국민적인 관심사가 있잖아요. 약간 냄비적인 것도 있고, 뭐하나가 유행이다 하면 짝 돌고 그런게 있어요. 그래서 지극히 우리나라적인 상황인 것 같은데, 미국은 각자 남의 일에 관심도 없고, 우리나라처럼 트렌드가 확 왔다가 확 가는 것이 없는거 같아요. 지역적인 특성 문화적인 특성 국민성 때문에 다른 것 같아요.

이지은: 해외 모델을 기용해 보신 적 있으세요?

홍윤주: 저는 없었어요

이지은: 빅모델을 선정하는 절차가 어떻게 되나요?

홍윤주: 두가지 경우가 있는데, 광고주가 찍어서 내려오는 경우가 있고 어떤때는 이걸 굉장히 비논리적인데, 오너의 부인이 누구의 팬이다 해서 찍어내려온 경우도 있어요. 사모님이 비의 팬이라라고 하면서 찍어내려온적이 있어요. 그래서 그 모델은 이 브랜드에 절대 맞지 않아요 하고 아무리 뜯어 말려도 그건 이미 정해진거예요. 제가 린나이에 비를 쓴적이 있어요. 그건 정말 미치는거죠 크리에이터 입장에서 는 그러니깐 비랑 가스레인지랑 무슨 상관이에요. 이렇게 클라이언트에서 먼저 제안을 하는 경우도 있구요, 우리가 먼저 제안을 하는 경우도 있구요.

이지은: 앞으로도 빅모델전략이 지속될까요?

홍윤주: 예. 제가 광고를 시작한지 18년..20년 다되가는데 그때부터 빅모델은 불패예요. 지극히 한국적인 상황인 것 같은데요. 빅모델에 기대간다는 것은 크리에이터로써 자존심 상하는 일이잖아요. 전략은 없는거니깐. 근데 어쩔 수 없어요. 여전히 먹히고, 실제로. 그리고 광고가 예술이 아니잖아요. 광고의 본질은 물건을 파는 것이기 때문에 광고는 물건을 잘 파는 광고가 잘만든 광고고, 당장 광고효과가 마켓에서 나타나기 때문에 그리고 광고주가 돈을 쓴 만큼 물건을 팔아줘야 하기 때문에 가장 손쉬운 방법을 택하는 것 같아요.

## Appendix G

*Interview Example, Seoul, South Korea, in English*

Yoon-Joo Hong, Creative Director, DDB, Seoul, South Korea  
Interview conducted at DDB office in Seoul, South Korea on January 15, 2010

Ji Eun: Have you ever used the "Big Model Strategy" before?

Yoon-Joo: Yes

Ji Eun: Why do you think the "Big Model Strategy" is used so often?

Yoon-Joo: The main reason is that we are under the 15-second TV commercial environment. Also, the entertainment industry is well-developed although the population is small. People share a fixed common interest. The "Big Model Strategy" is the method used to see the effect of advertising in a short time. Also, the product did not have gain trust with the big model. Using celebrities is like morphine; it results in an instant increase in sales. That's why advertisers prefer to use it. There are many proven cases that were successful. This method has not failed. In fact, as a creator, I do not like it because we cannot use our creative ideas because we need to count on the model, but we need to recommend it because it is proven that this strategy is effective. Also, we recommend this strategy when the budget is limited because my opinion is that the creative cannot have success without the massive media because consumers will see it all the time and be brainwashed. Olleh, Show, Qook (Korean Telecommunication companies advertising campaign names) are creative and unique; however, without massive media, it cannot be successful. There are some cases that were more advantageous when they use a big model for launching a new brand if the media and entire budget is relatively small. So we recommend to use a big model to be remembered although consumers are exposed to the ad once and it is easy to use IMC strategy with a big model.

Ji Eun : Have you ever had a case of not using a big model? If so, what was it and why?

Yoon-Joo: In that case, it was a foreign brand and its personality was already set. And when the brand personality is set, the big model can harm the brand. Also, sometimes it is risky to use a big model because of their private lives. When the brand character is already fixed, big models can be cumbersome. The big models' image represent the products' image, so in a brand's perspective in the long term, it is not good. When the human being become a brand, it is often risky. So big models become a poison to brands in a long-term strategy.

Ji Eun: Then, do you think using big models are effective?

Yoon-Joo: In some cases. Not all of them.

Ji Eun: Is there any product category that big models are used often or big models are not used at all?

Yoon-Joo: I would rather not say that there are some categories that use big models often or not, beauty products such as cosmetics brands and shampoo use big models 100%. Those beauty products' endorsers represent the product's effect so they are not just endorsing, they are also users. A celebrity endorsement is required to use in beauty products because consumers have aspirations of seeing them. I think the celebrities are disturbing in telecommunication services campaigns because the trend is changing very quickly so a model's image can't catch up. Products keep changing and a campaign runs in a very short time. Also we never know how the situation is going to change and the life cycle of the product is very short so a big model's image is somewhat risky. It can be better to use a new format or talk about the current issue rather than depending on a model.

Ji Eun: Then, do clients prefer to use big model?

Yoon-Joo: This is also case by case. Venus (Foundation lingerie brand) cannot imagine themselves without a big model. However, they used to not use a big model before. They started to use a big model when they started work with our agency since 2000, and they turned a profit. Also one of my clients are Clean & Clear which is a global brand. They have their own guideline for advertisements. They require two women shown as close friends and who look like real users. So we found girls that looked like students in that age group and have the possibility to become famous in the future. And those girls in our previous campaigns became famous and popular. So many people wanted to endorse this brand. However, once they used Yoon Ah from Girls' Generation (idol group singer) and sales went way up, so they continue to use this strategy. They started looking for well-known celebrities. The brand personality is degenerating. They admit the situation but they cannot avoid it because they already have the morphine.

Yoon-Joo: Neutrogena also used to use minor models, but now they want a star. So they are talking about Jung Eum Hwang.

Ji Eun: Have you ever seen many American advertisements? There are not that many big models. Have you ever thought about why there are not many big models in advertisements?

Yoon-Joo: The United States is different because of the media environment and territory size. Koreans have a nationwide concern or interest. They are somewhat like a pot. When something is trendy, it is spread out all over. So using celebrities in advertisements a lot is only limited in Korea. In the United States, people are not interested in others that much.

Also it seems like that trend is not changing really fast. So I think geographical, cultural and national traits create differences in using celebrities in advertisements.

Ji Eun: Have you ever used foreign celebrities?

Yoon-Joo: No, I haven't.

Ji Eun: What is the process of selecting the big model?

Yoon-Joo: There are two ways. The first one is the client decides whom to use. Sometimes this is very illogical. There was a case that the singer Rain was already chosen by the client because the CEO's wife was a fan of his. So we tried to stop them by saying Rain does not match with this brand. However, the decision was already made, so I used him. As a creator, this was insane. What's up with Rain and a gas range. Like this, there are some cases clients suggest first or we suggest first.

Ji Eun : Do you think this strategy will continue in the future?

Yoon-Joo: Yes, I have been working in the advertising industry for 18 years, almost 20 years. Since then, the big model strategy has been prevalent. It seems it is only limited to Korea, only using the big model strategy a lot. Using a celebrity in advertisements is shameful for creative directors because we are making advertisements without having a strategy. However, we need to use it because it still works. Actually, advertising is not art. The essence of advertising is selling a product so the advertisement increases sales. So we use the easiest way which is using a celebrity because we can see the advertising effect on the market and we have to make an advertisement that can sell as much as the client spent.