

ABSTRACT

The inclusion of celebrities and spokespeople in advertising campaigns has been a popular marketing strategy for many years. Celebrity endorsement is widespread in tourism marketing, where well-known actors, influencers, athletes, and other public figures endorse products, services, and locations to create higher recognition, visit intentions as well as awareness. However, little has been investigated on the impact of the origin of the celebrity endorser on consumers' destination attitudes and overall brand image.

Based on esteemed literature like the Source Credibility Scale and the Match-Up Hypothesis, this thesis investigates the difference between domestic and international celebrity endorsers in short promotional online videos and their effect on viewer's perceived attitudes about endorsers, destination attitudes, participation in eWOM as well as visit intention. To investigate the cause-and-effect relationship between the defined variables, a quantitative research approach in the form of an online experiment was conducted. More specifically, two YouTube videos that were uploaded by two different DMOs were selected. One video was published by Visit Dubai featuring Zac Efron, who represents international endorsers, and one clip by Tourism Switzerland starring Roger Federer, who represents the local endorser. Afterwards, a questionnaire considering the trustworthiness, expertise, believability, and product fit of the endorsers as well as questions regarding visit intention, destination attitudes, and willingness to create eWOM followed.

The findings of the experiment propose that destination marketers should consider the inclusion of native celebrity endorsers over international endorsers when wanting to create effective and convincing advertisements. Results of the study further reveal that DMOs who want to increase their visit intention should put great emphasis on an endorser's credibility and the usefulness of the video content.

DMOs and other tourism marketers benefit from the investigated topic since suggestions to create more effective visual ads, form desired attitudes and attract more travelers are being provided. Furthermore, this research supports existing literature on celebrity endorsement in destination marketing as well as gives new insights into the relevance and importance of celebrity endorsers' nationality.