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## Does The Content in Commercial Messages Match The Personal Views of The Celebrities Broadcasting Them?



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### ABSTRACT

Commercial Messages (CMs) are used in a variety of mass media, such as television, to promote products like healthy food. In CMs, celebrities often talk about the benefits of a product, but it is unclear if they are saying what they think. To add clarity, text information, known as “telops,” is added to television programs with words like “This is the view of the individual.” Taken at face value, we can interpret this as a celebrity expressing their personal opinion. However, celebrities earn money for appearing in CMs. A script is also used to promote the content of the CM. Considering this, the endorsement may be part of a script, and endorsing the advertised product could be part of the job that results in payment for the celebrity. Depending on the content, the celebrity may deceive the viewer of the CM. In this paper, we examine the contents of CMs and consider whether celebrities receiving payment for expressing an opinion about a product is problematic.



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## INTRODUCTION

There is a current boom in health foods in Japan<sup>1)</sup>, and commercial messages (CMs) are used widely in mass media, such as television, to promote such foods, as well as other products like electrical appliances and jewelry. In CMs, celebrities often talk about the advantages of a product, but an explanatory phrase like “This is the view of the individual” is usually added as text information, known as “telops.” Taken at face value, this can be interpreted as the honest expression of an individual’s opinion. However, celebrities usually earn money for appearing in CMs (Table 1)<sup>2)</sup>. They also read from a script that promotes the product in the CM. It is possible that the endorsement may have been scripted in advance, and that endorsing the promoted product is part of the job for which the celebrity is paid<sup>3)</sup>. If this is the case, it is unclear and difficult for the viewer to understand whether the endorsement itself, as well as the opinion of the celebrity, is scripted or an individual opinion. Depending on the content, the celebrity may be deemed to be deceiving the viewer of the CM. Even if the celebrity is not lying, there is something wrong with the composition of this CM. Although not always the case, the viewer may take onboard the remarks of the celebrity in a CM, especially if the celebrity is extremely likable or worthy of respect. Purchasing rate may potentially improve because of the favorable opinion<sup>4)</sup>. Celebrities often have many fans, and if they use or praise a product, their fans might buy it in an attempt to imitate them. In this paper, we scrutinize the contents of CMs and report on the problematic nature of celebrity endorsements.

### CM configuration

First, we clarify the composition of the CM that we consider problematic. Although sometimes absent, the moderator first provides product information. This moderator is usually a variety show host, an actor, or an employee of a product sales company. Background information on the product’s use and concerns about daily life are discussed. Specifically, health problems, such as obesity and mobility issues due to joint pain, are discussed. The user talks about their experience and feelings around using the product, either in the form of an interview by the moderator or in the form of speaking voluntarily. This often includes celebrities, such as actors, athletes, and announcers. This person usually talks about the quality of the product (good to use and beneficial to health). People other than celebrities may appear, but the content discussed is limited to the

advantages of the product, while any shortcomings are not discussed in the CM. Products that are often advertised in CMs include healthy foods, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics. These usually do not include the experience of using products in the CMs. However, it is better to obtain information before purchase, and it is beneficial to listen to the opinions of others. Details of electrical appliances, such as specifications, are often shown objectively. However, it is difficult to understand the effect of healthy foods, and it is unclear whether they have an effect, so consumers may be more susceptible to CMs in this case. If a celebrity that you know and like remarks on the product, you are more likely to be influenced (Table 2)<sup>4</sup>.

Meanwhile, CMs, which have been widely used in the past, are different from those these days, as celebrities and others take on the role of product explainer. While celebrities adopt the dubious position of an experienced user, it is made clear that this is a promotion. In some cases, they say that they are loyal users; in other cases, they show that they enjoy using the product. The viewer rarely questions whether this is correct. Unlike previously, the viewer usually does not think they are speaking objectively. Viewers know what the product is like before watching the CM. Moreover, viewers often look at it from the perspective of whether they should make a purchase; alternatively, they just watch it as a show that introduces a celebrity. Many viewers might purchase a product after seeing the celebrity having fun, even if the celebrity does not necessarily perform the product-related behavior in the CM. In this case, many products are usually already part of the viewer's daily life. Therefore, in terms of having initial information, it is unlikely that the content is taken on board, and it may be possible to objectively judge the product. There are many of these types of CM, such as those for electrical appliances and food. For example, in the case of food, the content of the promotion shows that the taste is very good, the nutritional value is high, or the balance of ingredients is good. However, different people will have different feelings. It is not often that viewers take it on board just because it is the opinion of a celebrity. The CM is highly objective because the specifications are expressed numerically, so they are less likely to be confused. Of course, if false data are displayed, the viewer may be deceived, but some organizations examine the exaggeration and falsehoods contained in CMs<sup>5</sup>, so it seems unlikely to be a problem. If viewers feel that there is no difference or a slight difference in the characteristics of the product, and if they are willing to purchase similar products, they will be slightly affected by the CM. This is because there are times when someone might want to try a product that is advertised in a CM, even if it is of the same quality. Normally,

only such effects can be expected from CMs, and the effects are smaller than in the previous example.

### **What we see, hear, experience, and know**

We do not know everything about how CMs are made. This is because we neither create nor commission the creation of CMs. However, we are, of course, viewers. We also have experience with such CMs. Of course, this is not as a celebrity. Thus, we only provide the information that we know.

First, if you are not a celebrity, you may not be paid for appearing in CMs. To be precise, if one of the many experienced users offers a few endorsements, they might receive a small reward, but it will not be paid according to the time taken. It is a very small amount, not enough for transportation, and it is not like a salary. In such cases, appearing in CMs is not regarded as a job, and is the result of wanting to appear as a hobby, even for free, or to meet a celebrity. It is also common to have the opportunity to use the product for more than a month in advance. Since it is decided in advance that the product itself will be received, instead of cash, and that a reward will be given, critical remarks are unlikely to be made. However, to people able to talk a lot, such as speaking dialog (applicable to people like actors, even if they are unknown), it may seem like a decent salary and appeal as a job. In addition, although it is unclear how much control is possible, CMs are usually made by editing the content and time of the recorded video to shorten it. This makes it possible to leave only the most convenient remarks. If a celebrity is hired for a CM with a high fee, most of the time will be devoted to the final part of the CM shoot. From a commonsense perspective, it is natural to think that a celebrity will only say something that favors the promotion of a product because it is their job. Perhaps it will be inefficient to leave out a portion of what is said. Meanwhile, if it is the remark of a performer who may or may not receive a small reward other than that, extracting only the necessary parts from a large number of remarks is not burdensome for the price. Even if a performer honestly states the shortcomings of the product, the CM creator has the right to cut and edit the remarks. Of course, it is difficult to include all the content said by everyone in the short running time of a CM, so, naturally, some parts are deleted. Such a difference is because even a single celebrity wields great influence, indeed, like an influencer<sup>(6),7)</sup>.

### **Possible problem**

CMs should aim to convey the characteristics of a product or service. If bias exists, the consumer's impressions are distorted, leading to them purchasing without normal judgment. In other words, there is no problem if the impressions of individual celebrities appearing in CMs are completely based on personal opinions, but if they are intentionally changed due to other factors, such as earning income, the viewer's willingness to purchase is impacted. In particular, when the degree of purchase decision based on content is high, the damage is great. It should also be noted that the impressions of a product based solely on the personal opinion of an influential celebrity do not necessarily apply to a large number of viewers. In the case of pharmaceuticals, the effects vary depending on gender, age, body weight, water content, substances taken together, and so on. The same may occur for healthy foods and cosmetics, and their effects may differ from person to person, with side effects occurring in some cases.

There is no doubt that CMs are meant to encourage the purchase of goods. However, depending on the content structure, a person who is not the advertiser of the product (a person outside of the advertiser) may promote the product. This may not be understandable to consumers<sup>3)</sup>. In some cases, it is clear that it is the CM content. However, it may seem confusing if it is inserted between factual programs, such as other news and variety shows, or if there is a continuous connection with dramas. As a result, viewers may mistake corporate advertising for neutral content.

### **CONCLUSION**

When a celebrity appears in a CM, it is clear that they are doing so as a job. However, depending on the production, the content of the endorsement, and the words of the telop in the CM, the viewer may perceive it as an individual endorsement rather than a product promotion. It is difficult for the viewer to make an objective judgment, but there is a part that is confusing because of the composition of the CM. Considering this, we believe that the viewer may be deceived. It cannot be said that only the celebrities who appear are in the wrong. However, we would like the celebrity to understand that they can improve purchasing motivation by complimenting or recommending the product. In addition, we would like to recognize that their influence is extremely large (Table 2). Celebrities may say things unconsciously or just do them

as part of their work, as their endorsement influences product selection and purchasing<sup>8</sup>). At the moment, especially on TV, it seems that there are some gray areas in the payment of money that are difficult to understand. If possible, we would like the viewers to have proper disclosure of what kinds of behavior and performance lead to rewards. It is generally suspected that no consumers are aware of this<sup>3</sup>). However, even if they do not earn income, they may express the surprising opinions of others. If you want to maintain a connection for future work, or if you feel like you may get a job from the sponsor, you may choose to endorse the product regardless of payment.

Television is a medium for which advertising rules have not been clear for a long time.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, special attention should be paid to TV CMs. Due to this ambiguity, it is difficult to ask the producer to improve at this point. After all, the lawyer's view is that it is a question of “whether the general public can understand that they are investing and promoting<sup>3</sup>.” However, there is a gap between what the lawyer thinks and what many general viewers can think. Therefore, it seems necessary for the viewer to have the ability to objectively assess the content and judge whether it is appropriate.

Although it is outside the scope of this research, it seems that when a celebrity appears in a CM, there is a condition that the product image must be maintained during the CM broadcast period. For example, they cannot consume food and drink from companies other than those in the CM. In the event of an accident or a situation that is harmful to health, the image of the product will be damaged, so it is necessary to dismiss the CM appearance. It seems that high penalties may be incurred. Considering such things, it can be said that celebrities have high CM appearance fees<sup>2</sup>). However, the details are strictly between the celebrity and the company providing the CM; the viewer is not involved. This may also be problematic.

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**Table No. 1: 2021 TV commercial guarantee market price of famous celebrities (high-priced person)**

Ranking	Guarantee per CM (US \$)	Occupation	Age
1 <sup>st</sup>	650,000	Actress	36
1 <sup>st</sup>	650,000	Singer, actor	52
3 <sup>rd</sup>	600,000	Actor	53
3 <sup>rd</sup>	600,000	Comedian, moderator	58
3 <sup>rd</sup>	600,000	Male idol, moderator	39
3 <sup>rd</sup>	600,000	Former professional tennis player, male newscaster	53
7 <sup>th</sup>	550,000	Actor, singer	49
7 <sup>th</sup>	550,000	Actor	55
7 <sup>th</sup>	550,000	Actor	48

The guarantee is an estimate of the average amount paid by a CM production company to the entertainer's agency and is not all the income received by the entertainer.

The age is as of September 2021.

Based on the data in reference 2).

**Table 2 Impressive TV CM creative elements**

Elements	Ratio (%)
Talent and character	48
Story flow and story	22
Dialog and narration	21
How to put out and call product / service names	18
Background and screen	17
Specific functions and features of products / services	14
Music, background music, and sound effects	14

Video research survey results (targets are men and women 13-59 years old, multiple answers).

Based on the contents of reference 4).

