Decoding the Vampire Effect: Investigating the Impact of Celebrities Overshadowing a Brand on Downstream Ad Processing

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Companies hire celebrities to enhance brand awareness and image. However, celebrities may also pose a threat to ad effectiveness. It is a common belief that celebrities attract attention but also distract from the brand. Research on this 'vampire effect' is scarce and its impact on downstream ad processing has not been investigated. In a large scale eye-tracking experiment (N = 112) under realistic exposure conditions with AI-modified real celebrity video ads, we investigate the effects of celebrities versus non-celebrities on consumer attention, ad attitude, brand recall, and purchase intention. We find a relative vampire effect: celebrities attract more attention than non-celebrities, but do not impair attention to the brand or product. Notably, the relative vampire effect has no negative impact on downstream brand processing: brand recall remains unaffected, while ad attitude and purchase intention benefit from celebrities, underscoring their persuasive value in advertising.

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