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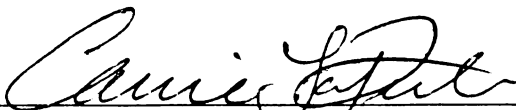
**EXAMINING THE CULTURAL ANTECEDENTS OF
PERCEIVED SOURCE CREDIBILITY AND THEIR
INFLUENCES ON ASIAN AMERICAN CONSUMERS'
RESPONSES TO ADVERTISING**

presented by

MARIKO MORIMOTO

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Ph.D. degree in Mass Media



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PERCEIVED SOURCE CREDIBILITY AND THEIR INFLUENCES ON
ASIAN AMERICAN CONSUMERS' RESPONSES TO ADVERTISING**

By

Mariko Morimoto

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ABSTRACT

EXAMINING THE CULTURAL ANTECEDENTS OF PERCEIVED SOURCE CREDIBILITY AND THEIR INFLUENCES ON ASIAN AMERICAN CONSUMERS' RESPONSES TO ADVERTISING

By

Mariko Morimoto

While the construct of source credibility has been a popular topic in advertising research, very few studies have examined cultural factors that may influence this construct. The purpose of the current study is to examine the cultural antecedents of perceived model credibility and the potential effects on Asian American consumers' responses to advertising. Specifically, Asian Americans' levels of ethnic identification and cultural congruency associations are examined to understand their relationships with the constructs of perceived model congruency and credibility. In addition, the study examines how Asian Americans' cognitive processing of perceived congruency and credibility affect advertising responses.

The findings reveal that for Asian American consumers, model congruency appears to be a significant predictor of perceived model credibility and advertising outcomes, while other cultural antecedents including the strength of ethnic identification, do not have a significant impact on Asian Americans' advertising evaluation process. Also, among three factors of perceived model credibility, trustworthiness seems to play an important role in determining the degree of perceived model credibility for Asian American consumers. Suggestions for future research and contributions to the field are also discussed.

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"The desire for knowledge is the driving force for everything. It is never too late to want to learn" by Ace

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INTRODUCTION

The U.S. society has continued to become increasingly multicultural and diverse over the past few decades. In particular, the growth of ethnic minority groups and their buying power is notable. Of these minority groups that have been experiencing a significant population growth, Asian Americans have long been neglected in the field of advertising research. While the growth of the general population in the U.S. has experienced an increase of 13 percent between 1990 and 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2001), the Asian American population has doubled from six million to 12 million in the same time period (Raymond 2001). Currently this group consists of 12.5 million, which is approximately 4.4 percent of the U.S. population (U.S. Census 2003), and the increase appears to be continuing. The U.S. Census (2001) predicts that by 2015, the Asian American population will reach 17.4 million and will consist of 5.5 percent of the overall population.

The characteristics of this consumer group are quite attractive to marketers. Asian Americans enjoy the highest level of average income. About 40 percent of Asian American households have incomes higher than \$75,000 while 35 percent of the non-Hispanic Caucasian families have the same income level (U.S. Census 2003). Also, according to estimates from the Selig Center at the University of Georgia, Asian Americans achieved a buying power of \$296.4 billion in 2002 (Gardyn and Fetto 2003). As consumers, Asian Americans tend to be highly educated, brand-conscious, and prefer premium goods (Kaufman-Scarborough 2000). Considering these facts, it is difficult for marketers to ignore this ethnic group.

In response, marketers try to accommodate their promotion campaigns to different ethnic and cultural groups by using cultural cues with which the target group can identify their value and beliefs (de Mooij 1998). Previous research on advertising evaluations also indicates that consumer attitudes toward ads can influence their attitudes toward the advertised brand and purchase intention (Batra and Ray 1986; MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch 1986). Featuring endorsers from the same ethnic group as the target consumer group in advertising is one method to incorporate cultural cues. However, very few studies have been conducted examining the tactics used by marketers to attract Asian American consumers or to assess their responses to advertising. The majority of studies on Asian Americans and advertising use the method of content analysis to examine representations of Asian Americans in print and TV advertisements (Taylor and Lee 1994; Taylor, Lee and Stern 1995; Taylor and Stern 1997; Morimoto and La Ferle 2002). Although we have recently begun to see some scholars paying attention to the reactions of Asian Americans to advertisements (Lee, Choi and Lee 2003), more research in this area is necessary to better understand and appeal to this affluent ethnic consumer group.

In addition to the practical contribution to the industry, the current study seeks to explore how cultural factors and the race of models presented in advertising influence Asian American consumer evaluations. Source credibility, the extent to which a source is perceived believable, has been studied by a number of researchers to understand its effect on persuasion and attitude change (Hovland and Weiss 1951; Birnbaum and Stegner 1979). In the context of advertising evaluations, source credibility can serve as a predictor of consumer attitudes toward advertising (Lafferty and Goldsmith 1999;

Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell 2000). Many studies on source credibility and its effect have been conducted thus far, but the majority of these studies have treated source credibility as an independent variable and focused mainly on the trustworthiness, expertise, or attractiveness of the source (Pornpitakpan 2004). Although it is crucial to recognize the influence of perceived credibility on attitudes toward advertising, to fully understand the influence of this construct on persuasion, more attention should be paid to other factors influencing source credibility, such as model-product congruency or model-consumer congruency.

Moreover, when studying ethnic consumers, one should recognize the importance of cultural influences on their attitudes and behaviors such as racial congruency with models or strength of ethnic identification. Pornpitakpan (2004) argues that very little has been studied about the potential influence of culture on perceived source credibility. Therefore, the current study seeks to contribute to the source credibility and ethnic advertising literatures through an examination of the underlying cognitive process of Asian Americans' reactions to advertisement. Specifically, Asian Americans' levels of ethnic identification, in relation to schema incongruity and perceived similarity, will be examined along with cultural congruency factors to understand their relationships with perceived source credibility. It is hoped that the current study will contribute to adding knowledge to the existing source credibility and ethnic advertising literatures, as well as provide guidance for advertisers to create more effective advertising strategies targeted to the Asian American community.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perceived Model Credibility

Source credibility has been examined by many social scientists in the past several decades in order to understand its effect on message persuasiveness. In a review of the credibility literature over the past five decades, Pornpitakan (2004) found that the majority of studies undertaken indicate that perceived source credibility has some degree of influence on communication effectiveness. In advertising, such credibility is often associated with a model or an endorser (Friedman and Friedman 1979; Patzer 1983; Freiden 1984; Kahle and Homer 1985; Kamins, Brand, Hoeke and Moe 1989; Kamins 1990; Ohanian 1990; Homer and Kahle 1990; Ohanian 1991; Kamins and Gupta 1994), the advertiser (MacKenzie and Lutz 1989), the advertisement (MacKenzie and Lutz 1989), corporate credibility (Lafferty and Goldsmith 1999; Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell 2000; Newell and Goldsmith 2001), or web credibility (Choi and Rifon 2002). In the current study, the literature on source credibility in relation to endorser/spokesperson credibility is the most relevant and is reviewed in the following section.

Scholars have identified mainly three components of source credibility, and proposed two models of source credibility. The *source credibility* model includes two components, *expertise*, the source's ability to make valid assertions about the object or issue, and *trustworthiness*, a belief of receivers that the source makes honest assertions (Hovland and Weiss 1951; Hovland, Janis and Kelley 1953). The *source attractiveness* model has the third component, *attractiveness* which refers to the perceived attractiveness

of the source (Joseph 1982; Patzer 1983; Kahle and Homer 1985; Ohanian 1991; Kamins 1990). Source attractiveness in the context of message effectiveness (and communication) is said to depend on the source's familiarity, likability, similarity and overall attractiveness to the receiver (McGuire 1985; Ohanian 1990). The following section will review each of these credibility components in more detail.

Trustworthiness

One of the earliest studies concerning source credibility and its relationship with communication effectiveness was conducted by Hovland and Weiss (1951). This study identified trustworthiness as one factor influencing perceived source credibility. Ohanian (1990) defined trustworthiness as the degree of the receiver's confidence in and acceptance of the communicator.

Trustworthiness is also considered to be related to the number of products a celebrity endorses. Tripp and her colleagues (1994) examined how the number of products celebrities endorse affects consumer evaluations of ads and purchase intentions. They found that as the number of products a celebrity endorses increases, the level of perceived trustworthiness decreases, and the number of products endorsed by the same celebrity also tends to negatively affect attitudes toward advertisements. The authors explained the phenomenon by suggesting that the greater number of endorsements made by a celebrity results in a decline of their salience/distinctiveness, and as a result, the endorsement effect including trustworthiness may be attenuated (Tripp, Jensen and Carlson 1994).

Personal selling literature explains the relationship between perceived source

trustworthiness and credibility. Liu and Leach (2001) studied consumer satisfactions of consultative salespeople, and customers' level of trust with a sales-person was positively related to the level of satisfaction with the salesperson. Jones, Moore, Stanaland, and Wyatt (1990) focused on the effect of races and gender of salespeople on perceived credibility by African American and Caucasian customers. They found that African American customers tended to perceive African American salespeople as more trustworthy, and, thus more credible salespeople. The researchers also argued that *homophily*, the degree to which individuals who interact are similar in terms of identity, can enhance the perceived trustworthiness of the communicator. This argument can be extended to the issue of congruency between a communicator and a receiver; if the receiver perceives his/her ethnic identity congruent with that of the communicator, he/she may consider the communicator more trustworthy. In the context of the current study, it can be argued that if Asian Americans perceive homophily and/or congruency between their race and the model's race, they may rate Asian American models more trustworthy and therefore more credible than Caucasian models.

While previous studies provide examples of positive relationships between perceived source trustworthiness, credibility, and attitudes toward advertisements and/or endorsers/salespeople, there have been very few studies that discovered a direct effect of trustworthiness on purchase intention. For example, Ohanian (1991) discovered no main effect of trustworthiness on the audience purchase intention of the advertised product regardless of the product usage. It appears that perceived trustworthiness is interrelated with the other components of source credibility, and leads to changes in attitudes and

behaviors (Patzner 1983). Liu and Leach's (2001) study on business-to-business salespeople's credibility and its effect on customer satisfaction suggests that perceived expertise of sales people affects the perceived trustworthiness. Hence, when measuring perceived credibility, it is recommended to investigate all of the three components of the construct rather than measuring the construct by simply asking whether or not the source is trustworthy.

Expertise

Birnbaum and Stegner (1979) defined *source expertise* as the perceived correlation between the communicator's reputation and the outcomes of verifications, and such reputation is said to be influenced by the source's training, experience, knowledge, and ability. In the proposed study, perceived expertise of the model may be linked to the model's race depending on the product type the model advertises. Such perceived expertise of the model may lead to a more favorable evaluation of the ad, brand, and purchase intention.

Friedman and Friedman (1979) conducted a study on endorser effectiveness in relation to product type. Using Kelman's (1961) internalization theory which argues that individuals are likely to lean toward the attitude or behavior advocated by a communicator if they believe or value the attitude/behavior of the communicator, the researchers hypothesized that when the endorser in an ad was perceived as an expert of the advertised product, consumers would be likely to rate the ad more favorable. The findings indicated that an ad of a vacuum cleaner was rated most highly by subjects when the home appliance expert endorsed a vacuum cleaner, while a costume jewelry ad was

rated the highest when a celebrity endorsed the product (Friedman and Friedman 1979). Another study conducted by O'Mahony and Meenaghan (1998) who also used internalization theory (Kelman 1961) as the theoretical ground, revealed that consumers expected congruency between the celebrity endorsers' expertise and the type of products they endorse. These examples indicate that when there is congruency between the expertise of the endorser and the advertised product, the advertising rating is likely to be more favorable. In terms of purchase intent, Ohanian's (1991) celebrity endorsement study suggests that consumer evaluations of perceived expertise of the endorser are significantly related to their intention to purchase the product. Also, Till and Busler (1998) examined the match-up effect of endorsers and their expertise, and reported that while both attractiveness and expertise positively affect attitude toward the advertised brand, expertise appears to be a more important factor that drives the match-up effect. Regarding the current study, it is expected that ethnic minority models will be regarded to have more expertise in products related to their race and ethnicity, such as food, skin foundation, or hair coloring and care products. Therefore, an interaction effect between the product type and perceived credibility including expertise can be hypothesized. However, the relationship should be influenced by the level of product involvement, and this construct is discussed in a later section.

Attractiveness

The third component, *attractiveness*, has been a popular research topic in advertising. Previous findings indicate that attractive endorsers tend to be liked more, and are likely to have a positive influence on the product they advertise. The attractiveness of

the endorser becomes more important when the advertised brand does not have a strong brand image (Joseph 1982). Hence, in the case of a new brand introduction, the use of attractive models/endorsers may be an effective strategy to leave a positive impression in consumers' minds. Also, the level of attractiveness can influence not only advertising evaluations and behavioral changes, but also the other components of source credibility such as expertise and trustworthiness, and liking toward the endorser (Patzner 1983).

Kahle and Homer (1985) manipulated the level of attractiveness, along with the level of subject involvement, and found a strong main effect of attractiveness on evaluations for the advertised product and purchase intention. They also argue that when attractive endorsers are featured in an ad, brand recall tends to be higher than the case of unattractive endorsers (Kahle and Homer 1985). However, Ohanian (1991) has found that perceived attractiveness was not related to purchase intention.

Some scholars paid attention to the match-up effect between celebrity endorsers and product type and discovered that for an attractiveness-related product, the use of an attractive celebrity endorser significantly improved the perceived credibility and attitude toward ads (Kamins 1990; Kamins and Gupta 1994; O'Mahony and Meenaghan 1998). A more recent study conducted by Till and Busler (2000) revealed that there was a significant main effect of endorser's attractiveness on respondents' attitudes toward brands as well as their purchase intentions. In particular, for the product category that helps to enhance personal attractiveness such as cologne, the effect of the endorser's physical attractiveness on brand attitude and purchase intent was significantly greater compared to the non-attractiveness related product like pens (Till and Busler, 2000). For

the most part, it appears that the effect of endorser attractiveness plays a positive and important role in enhancing favorability of ads, brands, and purchase intention.

Based on the previous empirical findings, it is possible to argue that perceived source credibility that consists of a model's expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness plays an important role in consumers' cognitive processing of advertisements, including Asian American consumers. While these three traditional factors certainly can influence the degree of perceived source credibility, it is also important to take other cultural factors into consideration when studying ethnic minority individuals and how they process information. The following sections will discuss such potential cultural antecedents of perceived model credibility and explicate the key concepts.

Possible Cultural Antecedents of Perceived Model Credibility

Self, Culture, Ethnicity, and Distinctiveness

Self and Culture

The concept of *self* has been acknowledged as an important and relevant factor in the study of consumer behavior (Sirgy 1982; Hogg, Cox and Keeling 2000; Reed 2002). As one's self is central to his/her thinking (Triandis 1989), possibly affecting attitudes and behaviors, it is essential to examine the self-concept and self-identity in considering the relationship with the cultural antecedents of perceived model credibility.

Rosenberg (1979) defined the self-concept as "the totality of an individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object" (p. 7). Based on this definition, consumer behavior scholars have attempted to develop several perspectives of the self concept in order to examine its relationship with consumption behaviors. One

such perspective applicable to the current study is the social-cognition approach which regards the self-concept as the overall self-referent knowledge in memory (Reed 2002). In particular, Sirgy's (1982) self-image/product-image congruity theory clearly represents this approach. The construct of *self-image*, the degree of value associated with a specific self-concept (Sirgy 1982), plays an important role in the theory. According to the theory, product attributes or product images tend to activate a self-schema involving the same images, and these image attributes, along with the value placed on the product, are likely to be influenced by the evoked self-schema (Sirgy 1982). In other words, the link between self-image and product attributes would invoke the strength of association in memory between a particular image and a product, and the consumer's value intensity with the self-image level (Reed 2002). Specifically, this self-image and product image relationship results in one of the following situations: 1) positive self-congruity, a comparison between a positive product image perception and a positive self-image belief; 2) positive self-incongruity, a comparison between a positive product image perception and a negative self-image belief; 3) negative self-congruity, a comparison between a negative product-image perception and a negative self-image belief; and 4) negative self-incongruity, a comparison between a negative product-image perception and a positive self-image belief (Sirgy 1982). Among these situations, it is argued that positive self-congruity is likely to positively correlate with the strength of purchase intention the highest, followed by positive self-incongruity, negative self-congruity, and negative self-incongruity (Sirgy 1982). In other words, when a consumer has a positive image about the product and such a product image is positively reflected on his/her own image

through the use or ownership of the product, his/her purchase intention is likely to be high.

In the process of the self-image/product-image congruity theory, it is indicated that one's self-esteem and self-consistency (self maintenance) needs tend to serve as mediators. Using this theory, scholars have argued that consumers would lean toward positively valued products in order to maintain their positive self-image, and would be more motivated to purchase/consume image-congruent products to enhance self-esteem and create identity (Sirgy 1982; Shavitt 1990; Hogg et al. 2000). In the field of advertising research, Wong and Zinkhan (1995) found that when there was congruency between consumers' self-concepts and advertising attributes, their brand evaluations and purchase intention tended to be more favorable than the incongruent situation. Applying the findings of Wong and Zinkhan (1995) to the current study, it is possible to argue that Asian American consumers may lean toward racially-congruent models and find them more credible than racially-incongruent models because the racially-congruent models could trigger their self-schema and enhance their self-identity. In addition, Asian American consumers may find racially-congruent models more credible if they advertise racially-charged products because the value and image associated with the product match with the image of the models, which is also similar to their own image. In a sense, we can argue that one's self-concept and self-image play a central and significant role in the information processing and the evaluation of advertisements because one tends to refer back to his/her own self in order to process information and make decisions.

As individuals are believed to have multiple characteristics, the self-concept is

considered multidimensional (Gergen 1971). In the case of ethnic consumers, one agent that may have a strong potential influence on the formation of the self-image, self-concept, and/or self-identity is culture.

Historically, scholars have attempted to define culture from various perspectives. In this study, culture is explicated based on the definition provided by Lehman, Chiu, and Schaller (2004) which says that culture is a collection of discrete behavioral norms and cognitions commonly held by individuals within definable population (p. 690). Carpenter (2000) argues that because culture consists of shared elements by the people within, it can influence individuals' perceptions of self, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Also, such shared elements of culture help distinguish the people within from others outside the cultural boundary (Lehman et al. 2004). According to these examples, culture defines unique characteristics of people within. Therefore, it is important to closely examine the potential cultural factors that may affect ethnic consumer behavior and advertising evaluations since various ethnic groups have different and unique cultures that may trigger exclusive consumer behavior and advertising information processing system. In particular, factors related to shared beliefs and values that are likely to influence advertising evaluation systems and consumer behavior, including perceived model credibility, will be referred to as *cultural* antecedents in the current study.

Triandis (1989) argued that culture tends to influence every level of an individual's attitude and behavior through one's self perception. According to the researcher, an individual is assumed to have three main aspects of self: 1) the *private self*, which involves the individual's traits, states, or behaviors; 2) the *public self*, which

corresponds with the generalized other's view of the self; and 3) the *collective self*, cognitions related to a view of the self found in collective situations such as family, coworkers, and society; an individual is likely to differently sample these aspects of self in different cultures and contexts (Triandis 1989). Combining Tajfel's (1979) social identity theory which states that a part of the individual's self-concept is derived from his/her knowledge of the membership in a social group along with the values and emotional significance associated with the membership, Triandis (1989) argued that in a collectivistic culture such as Asian culture, one is likely to sample the collective self which corresponds to assess the self by the generalized other (Triandis 1989). With regards to Asian American consumers, although they live in America which is often classified as an individualistic culture according to Hofstede's (1997) typology, they may be more inclined to sample the collective self due to their cultural heritage compared with the general American population, and therefore, recognize themselves as a member of the Asian American consumer group. Such self-recognition as Asian American may enhance their identity as Asian Americans.

Also, the self-concept in the cultural context is important for understanding the influence of an endorser on Asian American consumers because of the characteristics of uncertainty avoidance. According to Hofstede (1997), uncertainty avoidance is defined as the degree to which an individual tolerates uncertainty and ambiguity. Asians are generally considered to be high in uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede 1997), and Asian Americans may have a higher degree of uncertainty avoidance compared with general Caucasian Americans if they strongly perceive themselves as Asians. Because they may

be more prone to be high in uncertainty avoidance, the role of source credibility in the information processing may play an important and critical role in their advertising and brand evaluations, as well as purchase intentions. For example, Asian American consumers may find a model from the same ethnic background more credible because they regard the model as more similar to themselves and familiar, which reduces uncertainty. Hence, when studying ethnic consumers and source credibility issues, it is advisable to pay attention to the influence of the self-concept and identity in relation to culture.

Race and Ethnicity

Several cultural factors can be considered in relation to Asian Americans' self-identity. In particular, ethnicity and race may be important elements that influence their self-concept. Many scholars have attempted to explicate the concepts of race and ethnicity in social science. Traditionally, race and ethnicity have been considered separate constructs. For example, Marger (1999) states that ethnicity is characterized by unique cultural traits, sense of community, and ascribed membership with a distinct territory. Other scholars argue that ethnicity refers to a group with common national or religious backgrounds (Ogden, Ogden and Schau 2004). On the other hand, it is often argued that race refers to biological and physical characteristics of a person (Kibria 1998). While ethnicity appears to suggest a sense of belonging to cultural, religious, and geographical groups, race has been mainly defined by an individual's physical characteristics and appearances.

However, some scholars point out that the distinction between these two

constructs is not clear. Khanna (2004) argues that one's racial identity could be influenced by cultural exposures that are often associated with ethnicity. Stephan and Stephan (1989) suggest that physical appearance may influence one's perception on his/her ethnicity. For example, the study of Khanna (2004) that examined ethnic identity of multiracial Asians indicates that ethnic identity of Asian-white subjects is likely to be influenced by their Asian physical characteristics. Hence, for the current study, the combined approach to race and ethnicity will be applied. Specifically, ethnicity is defined as a group with common national/geographic origin, culture, religion, and/or physical characteristics such as skin color in the current study. Inclusion of physical characteristics in the definition is important because members of a minority group are more likely to feel familiar to a person from another minority group than a person who is Caucasian, even if they are not from the same ethnic group (Appaih 2001). Agbayani-Siewert (2004) also argues that membership in a racial group is similar with shared cultural values and attitudes. Because one's physical appearance appears to influence his/her cognitive processing of cultural cues, it is crucial that the operational definition of ethnicity reflects both cultural and physical characteristics.

Based on this definition, Asian Americans in this study are defined as people with the ancestry rooted in Asian countries other than India, the Middle East, and the former members of Soviet Union (Taylor and Lee 1991). For example, American citizens or permanent residents with the ancestry rooted in China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand may be considered Asian Americans. Because the proposed definition of ethnicity indicates the

shared physical characteristics, individuals with East and South East Asian backgrounds will be targeted for the study.

In the current study, the definition of Asian culture is based on the region where similar values and/or religion are held by the people. In this region (East Asia), Confucianism is the basis for the beliefs and behaviors of the people. According to the doctrine, every member in the society has a role to play, and the key relationships are established around the family; obedience to parents, elder people, and sovereign are expected (Keller and Kronstedt 2005). Relationships and connections are highly regarded in Confucian society, which can be also found as a characteristic of collectivistic culture. People in Confucius culture value harmony with others, and such a tendency is reflected in a group-oriented nature of people in this region. Because these behavioral and attitudinal tendencies are shared by people in this region due to the commonly held value of Confucianism, the current study defines Asian culture by the geographical region.

Ethnicity can be operationalized in various ways based on the proposed definition. Stephan and Stephan (1989) introduce several variables reflecting one's ethnic identity, such as religion, and cultural and religious ceremonies as well as food consumption, and Xu, Lotz, and Almeida (2004) have developed a scale based on these variables. Webster (1994) also identified language use and reference group influence as indicators of ethnic identity. Ogden et al (2004) state that the national/regional origin should be taken into consideration when studying ethnicity and ethnic consumers. In addition, self-identification measures, such as asking subjects to describe who they are (McGuire et al. 1987), may be helpful in assessing ethnic identity because they are

believed to better reflect the inner beliefs of individuals about their viewpoint on cultural and ethnic realities (Desphande et al. 1986; Ogden et al. 2004). These variables are considered to be representative of one's ethnic identity and the strength of ethnic identification.

Ethnic identity and ethnic identification should be treated separately, according to several scholars such as Ogden et al. (2004) and Stayman and Deshpande (1989). Stephan and Stephan (1989) define ethnic identity as "the identification of an individual or group of individuals with a particular ethnic group (p. 507)." Hence, ethnic identity represents one's association to an ethnic group (Ogden et al. 2004). Meanwhile, ethnic identification is often associated with the strength of one's ethnic affiliation (Green 1997; Appaih 2000; Ogden et al. 2004). For the current study, both aspects of ethnicity will be incorporated into the conceptualization of ethnicity.

Distinctiveness

In terms of one's ethnic identity and its relation to Asian American consumers' cognitive processing, McGuire's (1985) distinctive theory can be used as a guide for understanding the mechanism of ethnic identity and its influence on perceived model credibility. The researcher argued that for individuals who are members of ethnic minority groups, such as Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native Americans, they are likely to be more aware of their ethnicity compared with members of the majority group because of the distinctive traits which tend to be more central to their self-concept (McGuire 1984; McGuire et al. 1978; Aaker, Brumbaugh and Grier 2000). Forehand, Deshpande, and Reed (2002) reported that individuals are more likely to self-report their social identity,

such as ethnicity, when they are distinctive in social environments. Applying these arguments, it is possible to argue that since Asian Americans only consist approximately 4 percent of the overall U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau 2001), it is likely that they perceive their distinctive ethnic traits more than those in the majority group. As a result, their ethnic-identity may be strongly influenced by their ethnicity. Then, the self-identity could influence potential cultural antecedents of perceived model credibility such as strength of ethnic identification.

In the context of marketing, distinctiveness implies that when the proportion of minority group members is small in the general population, ethnically-targeted cues and/stimuli are more likely to work effectively to appeal to the minority group members (Deshpandé and Stayman 1994; Aaker et al. 2000). For example, Deshpandé and Stayman (1994) compared Hispanics and Caucasian American consumers in two cities, San Antonio (Hispanics as a dominant group) and Austin (Caucasians as the majority) to investigate how the perceived ethnic distinctiveness influences the evaluations of spokespersons. The results suggest that in both cities, ethnic minority participants evoked their ethnic identity more spontaneously than members of the majority group. In addition, when consumers' ethnic salience became greater due to the numerical minority status, their evaluations of racially congruent models in ads and the advertised brands were more positive. Specifically, Hispanic consumers in Austin where they were a minority group tended to mention their ethnicity more spontaneously than in those in San Antonio where the Hispanic population is considered a majority; they were more likely to rate the Hispanic spokesperson more favorably than Hispanics in San Antonio (Deshpandé and

Stayman 1994).

In addition, Aaker et al. (2000) argued that consumer distinctiveness can serve as a moderator in targeted versus non-targeted marketing efforts. These researchers found that when minority consumers, such as African Americans and homosexuals, were exposed to advertising stimuli that were tailored for their unique characteristics, they rated the ads more favorably than non-targeted ads (Aaker et al. 2000). It is noteworthy to point out that in these studies, distinctiveness has been considered an enduring state where individuals who belong to minority groups were considered to consistently perceive distinctiveness due to their relatively small size in the greater population.

Other scholars have proposed that it is ethnic self-awareness that moderates the strength of ethnic identification and the target market effects, rather than ethnic distinctiveness (Stayman and Deshpandé 1989; Forehand and Deshpandé 2001). This line of research states that while ethnic self-awareness is a temporary salience that can be cued by ethnic distinctiveness, the strength of ethnic identification is an ongoing association between one's sense of self and their ethnicity; therefore, ethnic self-awareness is activated only when people are ethnically cued (Forehand and Deshpandé 2001). As a result, ethnic self-awareness enhances the target market effects in the case of high ethnic identifiers; however, it does not necessarily affect one's strength of ethnic identification (Forehand and Deshpandé 2001). Although this argument can be considered an alternative explanation to the role of self-awareness, empirical studies suggest that ethnic and social distinctiveness tend to influence the levels of ethnic identification for Hispanics and Caucasians (Deshpandé and Stayman 1994) and Asian

Americans (Forehand et al. 2002). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that the intensity of Asian American ethnic identification is likely to be influenced by their ethnic distinctiveness.

Schema Incongruity

Another factor that may influence the effect of Asian American ethnic identification on perceived model credibility and advertising evaluations is schema congruity. Shank and Abelson (1979) define a schema as a cognitive structure with specific knowledge about stimuli, and plays an important role in encoding and retrieving memory information (Dimofte, Forehand and Deshpandé 2004). Originally proposed by Mandler (1982), schema congruity theory argues that when an individual processes information to evaluate an object/issue, one of the three situations can take place. First, when the individual's expected or prior values are congruent with the perceived value of the object of the evaluation, he/she is likely to accept the value easily because it is perceived as a match, therefore, familiar (Mandler 1982; Stayman, Alden and Smith 1992). In this case, the knowledge formation leading to an evaluation of the object is relatively less elaborated because such a match between the individual's prior expectation and the perceived value does not require a strong effort to process the information (Peracchio and Tybout 1996). Combined with congruency theory (Osgood and Tannenbaum 1955), such congruity is likely to result in a favorable evaluation of the object because people prefer objects that match with their expectations (Mandler 1982; Meyer-Levy and Tybout 1989).

Another possibility is schema incongruity. Mandler (1982) broke down the

concept of schema incongruity into two levels: moderate and extreme schema incongruity. Schema incongruity is a state when there is a partial mismatch between an individual's prior expectation about the object and the actually perceived value of the object (Mandler 1982; Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989). Mandler (1982) argues that the degree to which an individual can resolve anomalies or a mismatch between their expectation and the actual value of the object with ease determines the level of incongruity.

Moderate schema incongruity is believed to result in a more favorable evaluation of the object compared with schema congruity or extreme incongruity because in this situation, an individual is likely to be able to resolve incongruity by attempting to process information intensively (Mandler 1982). Such elaboration of knowledge can be perceived as interesting and rewarding, and therefore, is likely to result in a favorable evaluation of the object (Peracchio and Tybout 1996). On the other hand, in the case of extreme schema incongruity, Mandler (1982) argues that it is likely to generate a negative attitude or evaluation because the accommodation to anomalies is likely to produce anxiety or frustration. Therefore, to maximize a positive evaluation of an object, it is preferable to achieve the moderate level of schema incongruity when an individual processes information about an object.

Previous studies in the field of marketing examined the effect of moderate schema incongruity, and discovered that this state maximized consumers' positive attitudes toward products and brands (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989; Stayman et al. 1992; Meyers-Levy, Louie and Curren 1994). For example, Meyers-Levy and Tybout (1989) discovered that moderate incongruity between consumers' perception of soft drink

attributes and the actual product values led to a more favorable product evaluation compared with the cases of congruity and extreme incongruity. In terms of brand evaluations, Meyers-Levy et al. (1994) manipulated company brand names for a nutrition book, and found that when there was a moderate mismatch between the product and the brand name, consumers were likely to evaluate the brand more favorably compared with congruity and extreme incongruity. Stayman et al. (1992) examined the level of congruity between consumers' pre- and post-product trial perceptions, and found support for Mandler's (1982) argument on moderate schema incongruity effect on positive evaluations. Based on these examples, we can argue that if Asian Americans perceive moderate incongruity between their prior knowledge about an object, such as advertisements, and the actual attributes of the object, such as featured models, they may evaluate the object more favorably. Although previous content analyses of Asian models in American advertising indicated that Asian Americans were slightly overrepresented as a proportion of their size in the overall population (Taylor and Lee 1994; Taylor and Stern 1997; Morimoto and La Ferle 2002), their appearance in mainstream advertising is still not prominent compared with other ethnic groups. Therefore, Asian Americans may generally expect to see Caucasian models in advertising. When their expectation is incongruent with what they actually see in ads, such as seeing an Asian American model, their evaluation of the model may be regarded as interesting and a pleasant surprise, and therefore, leading to a more favorable attitude toward the model in the ad.

There is also another possibility of the positive effect of moderate schema incongruity on one's ethnic identity. In the advertising literature, Dimofte, Forehand and

Deshpandé (2004) examined how ad schema incongruity influences the ethnic awareness of Hispanics and Caucasian Americans and their advertising evaluations. The researchers manipulated a voice-over of a TV commercial, and created a version with the English voice-over and another version with the Spanish voice-over, and examined how the incongruity between consumers' prior expectation about typical advertising (featuring mainly English voice-overs) and the actual voice-over in the manipulations influenced participants' ethnic awareness and their attitude toward the spokesperson in the TV commercials (Dimofte et al. 2004). The results indicate that the exposure to incongruent ad schema (TV commercial with Spanish voice-over) increased the self-ethnic report rate for both Hispanics and Caucasians, but the increase rate was greater for the Hispanic participants, and the brand recall rate for the ad schema incongruent manipulation was greater than that of the congruent manipulation (Dimofte et al. 2004). The researchers also argue that the incongruity between the existing ad expectation and the actual ad attributes can draw more attention to specific ad characteristics such as ethnic cues used in the ad; because processing the information on such ad-schema incongruity requires more involvement, the elaboration in the information processing is likely to increase ethnic awareness (Dimofte et al. 2004).

A similar phenomenon may take place for Asian American consumers and their ethnic identification. While the strength of ethnic identification is generally considered an ongoing state that may not be necessarily influenced by advertising cues (Forehand and Deshpandé 2001), in other literatures, situational ethnicity (Staymand and Deshpande 1989), which is generally regarded as a temporary state, is measured by the same scale

used for ethnic identification. Therefore, it can be also argued that ethnic identification has a base level that can be considered ongoing or/and enduring, but the base may be enhanced by situations and cues. In other words, the intensive ethnic cue processing (in this case, model's race in an ad) resulting from the incongruity between Asian American consumers' expectation about models' race in advertising in general and the actual portrayal of an Asian American model in the ad may enhance their strength of ethnic identification particularly when they are exposed to ads featuring Asian American models. As these examples indicate, the level of schema congruity may serve as a moderator for the strength of ethnic identification, as well as the evaluation of the model and the overall impact of credibility on advertising outcome measures.

Situational Ethnicity, Ethnic Self-Awareness, and Ethnic Identification

Situational Ethnicity and Ethnic Self-Awareness

In ethnic advertising research, three ethnicity-related constructs have been identified: situational ethnicity or felt ethnicity (Stayman and Deshpandé 1989; Forehand and Deshpandé 2001), ethnic self-awareness (Forehand and Deshpandé 2001), and ethnic identification (Whittler and DiMeo 1991; Appaih 2000; Appaih 2001; Green 1999; Whittler and Spira 2002).

Situational ethnicity is based on an assumption that variability of ethnic identity may depend on the immediate social situation and is related to the individual's perception of that situation (Okamura 1981). Stayman and Deshpandé (1989) distinguished the difference between situational (or felt) ethnicity and ethnic identification, stating that while ethnic identification refers to who one is, situational ethnicity is about how one

feels in and about a situation. Combined with distinctiveness theory, it can be argued that if an individual perceives him/herself as a ethnic minority member, the degree of situational (or felt) ethnicity is going to increase. Stayman and Deshpandé (1989) suggest that the interaction effect between consumers' self-designated ethnicity choice and their social situation appeared to influence situational ethnicity. While situational ethnicity is more concerned about an individual's self-perception depending on the context he/she is in, ethnic self-awareness (discussed in the following paragraph) tends to be more focused on the effect of situational ethnicity on cognitive information processing and behaviors.

Forehand and Deshpandé (2001) introduced the concept of ethnic self-awareness, a temporary state in which an individual is more sensitive to information related to his/her ethnicity, to better understand the influence of temporary ethnicity on attitude and behavioral changes. Unlike situational ethnicity which assumes that the main influential factor is the environment in which the individual is located, ethnic self-awareness assumes that this state depends on many factors, including the social situation. For example, the strength of ethnic identification, which is considered an enduring state (discussed later in the section) and ethnic cues in advertising, have been considered the potential determinants of ethnic self-awareness in advertising research (Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Forehand, Deshpandé and Reed 2002). In addition, related to the idea of advertising cues as a potential determinant of ethnic self-awareness, Dimofte et al. (2004) argue that moderate schema incongruity between the prior expectation about seeing Caucasian models in general advertising and the actual exposure to ethnic minority models in an ad may also influence ethnic self-awareness. As a result, the

elaboration of ethnic self-awareness may lead to more favorable advertising evaluations.

Ethnic Identification

Ethnic identification has been rigorously studied in advertising research to understand ethnic consumer responses to advertising stimuli (Whittler and DiMeo 1991; Appaih 2000; Appaih 2001; Green 1999; Whittler and Spira 2002). Unlike situational ethnicity and ethnic self-awareness which are often considered temporary states, ethnic identification is generally considered a personality trait (Deshpande, Hoyer and Donthu 1986; Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Dimofte et al. 2004). The rationale for this approach is that one is born a member of an ethnic group, and does not usually leave the group, and the degree of assimilation to the mainstream society depends on his/her relationships with in- and out-groups (Marger 1999). Previous studies have stated that the strength of ethnic identification is likely to influence ethnic self-awareness (Deshpandé et al. 1986), and the marketing and consumer behavior literature also shows ethnic identification as an indicator of consumers' attitudes toward products and behavioral changes (Deshpande et al. 1986; Williams and Qualls 1989; Donthu and Cherian 1992; Webster 1994; Chung and Fischer 1999; Lee, Fairhurst and Dillard 2002; Xu, Shim, Lotz and Almeida 2004).

However, there is another approach to ethnic identification and its likelihood of being influenced by cultural cues. Kelman (1961) argued that when an individual responds to social influence, there are mainly three processes one is likely to take depending on the characteristics of the social influence: 1) compliance; 2) identification; 3) internalization. The theory of identification is the most applicable to the current study.

Identification occurs when an individual adopts a behavior of another individual or a group because the adopted behavior is associated with an acceptable and satisfactory self-image; during the process, the individual assesses the level of similarity and relevance with another individual or group (Kelman 1961; Appaih 2000). Different identification forms may take place depending on situations. For example, *classical identification* takes place when an individual fully or partially accepts the influence from the agent (Kelman 1961). In terms of advertising evaluations, the positive identification process could take place if a person feels familiar and similar to the models presented in ads. Another form of identification, a *reciprocal role relationship*, could also explain consumer responses to advertising stimuli. In a reciprocal role relationship, both parties are defined with reference such as friendships and group memberships, and if the individual finds a particular relationship satisfying and acceptable for self-definition, he/she is likely to accept the influence (Kelman 1961). Based on this assumption, we can argue that an individual may accept the influence of another person, such as a model in an ad, if he/she finds the other person relevant and similar to him/herself. This example also indicates that the degree of identification is actually influenced by cues such as the influence from a communicator. This example suggests the possibility of ethnic identification being partially enhanced by environments or cultural cues, although individuals are likely to have a certain base level of ethnic identification that would not be influenced by cultural cues.

Such identification processes are not only between individuals and endorsers but also between individuals and the social group to which they belong. Kelman (1961)

suggested that identification may also take place when an individual attempts to maintain their relationship with a group with which their self-definition is associated. This type of ethnic identification is likely to be an enduring state discussed by Deshpande et al. (1986). For ethnic consumers, one way to self-define could be to recognize their ethnicity. Parker, Sussman, Crippens, Elder, and Scholl (1998) state that the term, ethnic identity, refers to perceptions of shared unique cultural traditions that are persistent across generations, and ethnic identification is the degree of an individual's sense of belonging and group pride, as well as prescribed norms, values, and social behaviors. Hence, consumers' levels of ethnic identification may be represented by how strongly they feel associated with their own ethnic group.

When examining one's *ethnic* identification, it can be argued that there are mainly three ways of how one identifies with his/her ethnicity based on the proposed definition of ethnicity since the definition of ethnicity includes one's physical characteristics (race), values, attitudes, behaviors. First, one may identify with his ethnicity due to the physical and/or racial appearance. For example, Asian Americans may identify with an Asian model in an ad because of the similar physical appearance. The second possibility is that one may identify with his/her ethnicity because he/she feels that he/she belongs to the ethnic group due to similar values or attitudes. The identification process may take place for Asian Americans if they perceive an Asian model representing the similar values or beliefs. The third case is that an individual may identify with his/her ethnicity through similarly-conducted behaviors. For instance, Asian Americans may identify with an Asian model because the actions or behaviors

represented by the model are similar to theirs.

In the current study, the hypotheses related to ethnic identification include all of these three levels of ethnic identification, but some hypotheses place more emphasis on physical appearance while some other hypotheses focus more on attitudes or feelings. However, while specific hypotheses weigh more on a certain aspect of ethnic identification, such as model's physical appearance, one's ethnic identification process may involve other criteria such as assuming the model has a similar religious background or values. Such individual differences in perception of an endorser or a model in an advertisement are likely to depend on each person's unique criteria. In this study, while actual responses toward cultural cues presented in an ad, such as models from different ethnic backgrounds, the criteria and perceptions used in the process of ethnic identification are not measured.

In particular, scholars have suggested that the strength of ethnic identification, along with ethnic origins, can explain differences and similarities among ethnic consumers. Williams and Qualls (1989) argued that it is important to take the intensity of ethnic identification into account because if we neglect the intensity, the data from weak ethnic identifiers may contaminate the analysis. The majority of these previous studies with an emphasis on the strength of consumer ethnic identification have been mainly on either African American consumers (Williams and Qualls 1989; Whittler and DiMeo 1991; Green 1997; Appaih 2000; Appaih 2001), Hispanics (Desphande, Hoyer and Donthu 1986; Donthu and Cherian 1992; Webster 1994), or international consumers (Tan and Farley 1987; Lee et al. 2002). Since there is a lack of literature on Asian American

consumers and ethnicity, the following literature review will mainly focus on studies concerning other ethnic minority groups in the United States.

In marketing, ethnic identification has been acknowledged as an important predictor of consumer behavior. For example, scholars have argued that consumption patterns are strongly influenced by the strength of ethnic identification. Deshpande et al. (1986) and Donthu and Cherian (1992) found that the stronger the level of ethnic identification of Hispanic consumers, the more brand-loyal they are and more likely to buy brands targeted to their ethnic group. Another study of Hispanic consumers conducted by Webster (1994) indicates that high Hispanic ethnic identifiers tend to show more of the ancestral Hispanic cultural characteristics such as male-dominance in decision-making compared with weak Hispanic ethnic identifiers. Examining Asian American consumers, Xu et al. (2004) indicate that those with a greater sense of Asian ethnicity tend to be engaged in culture-specific consumption such as eating ethnic food and enjoying ethnic movies and music compared with low Asian American ethnic identifiers. Therefore, it is possible to argue that high Asian ethnic identifiers may tend to react positively toward ethnic-oriented brands and advertising.

Other studies have actually examined the effect of ethnic identification on consumer responses toward advertisements featuring ethnic and racial cues such as models from different ethnic groups. Similar positive consumer reactions toward the ads with ethnic-oriented cues have been found. These studies suggest the function of ethnic identification as a mediator between a model's race and consumer advertising/brand evaluations and purchase intentions. Whittler (1989) found that African American college

students were more likely to purchase a product (laundry detergent) advertised by an African American actor while highly racially-prejudiced white college students with negative racial attitudes toward racial minority groups were less likely to obtain additional information when they were shown the same advertisement. Along the similar research stream, Whittler and DiMeo (1991) have examined the level of racial prejudice held by white participants and the influence on perceived similarity of the models, brand recognition, as well as the influence of model's race in the ad. The results indicate that high racially-prejudiced whites perceived an African American model in an ad as less similar; however, low racially-prejudiced whites did not show any difference in perceived similarity between white and African American models. In addition, high racially-prejudiced whites tended to identify with the white model more than the African American model; when the high racially-prejudiced whites saw the ad with the African American model, their brand-name recognition also declined (Whittler and DiMeo 1991). Recent studies also show this trend.

Studying African American adolescents, Appaih (2000) found that African Americans perceived African American models in ads more similar to themselves than white models, and they were more likely to identify with African American characters than with white characters. The researcher also indicated that African Americans were more likely to believe that ads with African American characters were intended more for them than ads with white characters, and were likely to evaluate the African American models and the ads more favorably than ads with Caucasian models (Appaih 2000). Hence, a similar phenomenon can be hypothesized for Asian American consumers

regarding their evaluations of racially-congruent models. Asian Americans may be more likely to identify with Asian models in advertisements. They may also think that the ads are more targeted toward themselves when Asian models are featured in advertisements.

Along similar lines, Appaih (2001) closely examined the strength of ethnic identification as a key variable in the cognitive processing of advertising stimuli by ethnic consumers. The findings show that participants with strong black ethnic identification perceived themselves more similar to and identified with African American characters in ads than weak black ethnic identifiers. In addition, Green (1997) studied African American females and their reactions to ads featuring models from difference ethnic groups, and also took media placement and model display into account. Green (1997) discovered that the strength of ethnic identification played a significant mediating role in generating favorable attitudes toward racially-charged product ads (skin foundation) with African American models compared with ads featuring Caucasian models. She concluded that it appeared that high African American ethnic identifiers tended to prefer ads featuring African American models in dominant positions more when they were placed in racially-targeted media, while weak ethnic identifiers showed more favorability toward ads featuring Caucasian models in dominant positions when placed in the mainstream media (Green 1997). Green (1997) argued that weak ethnic identifiers tended to favor Caucasian or Caucasian-dominant models along with the mainstream media because they may have identified more closely with the dominant American culture and were likely to consume mainstream media products where Caucasians were portrayed often in a dominant position. A more recent study conducted by Whittler and

Spira (2002) suggests that African American consumers who highly identify with their culture evaluated the product and ad featuring an African American model more favorably than with a Caucasian model. According to the findings from these previous studies that focused on African Americans in general, we can argue that for Asian Americans, the strength of ethnic identification may also be a key factor that can influence their responses toward advertising and brands.

Moreover, ethnic identification may serve as a predictor of perceived model credibility. According to Kelman (1961), an individual may adopt the message from a communicator because he/she finds the person relevant and/or similar to them. An empirical study by Whittler and Spira (2002) supports this argument. The racial cue (model's race) presented in an ad motivated high African American ethnic identifiers to process the ad message in a biased way, leading them to rate the product advertised by the African American model more favorably (Whittler and Spira 2002). In the context of the current study, Asian American consumers may identify themselves with models from the same ethnic background because of the similar cultural background and appearance, and therefore, the messages from the Asian American models may be well-accepted by the Asian American consumers. The study of Appaih (2001) found that both Asian American and Hispanic consumers tended to perceive themselves more similar to African American models than white models in the ads, and they rated the ad with the African American models more favorably. The researcher stated that the findings may be because the adolescents identified themselves more with African American youth culture and positive racial stereotypes such as "urban, hip, cool, athletic, and trendsetters" (Appaih 2001, p.

44). As these scholars argue, it appears that the strength of ethnic identification influences ethnic consumers' responsiveness to racial cues presented in advertisements. Additionally, these examples indicate that ethnic identification may mediate the relationship between model's race and product type and the resulting perceived model credibility which may influence advertising/brand evaluations and purchase intentions. Hence, the current study seeks to investigate the potential causal relationship between Asian ethnic identification and perceived model credibility and its effect on advertising evaluations. However, another important variable that may influence perceived model credibility is cultural congruency.

The Role of Cultural Congruency

Congruency Theory

The concept of cultural congruency may be helpful to better understand the relationship between the strength of ethnic identification and perceived source credibility. Previous literature on source credibility in an advertising context has raised the issue of congruency as an influencing agent (Kamins 1990; Kamins and Gupta 1994). Likewise, the current study plans to examine the role of congruency in Asian Americans' cognitive processing of advertisements. In particular, this study argues that *cultural* congruency may enhance the effect of perceived model credibility and advertising evaluations.

The idea of congruency as a predictive agent of attitude change suggests that attitude changes, or evaluation changes are likely to take place when they are congruent with the existing frame of reference (Osgood and Tannenbaum 1955). Osgood and Tannenbaum (1955) argued that existing attitudes toward an object or issue prior to

reception of the message play an important role in determining the level of congruity and its influence on attitude changes. When there is a distance between the preexisting attitude toward the object/source/issue and the actual location of the object/source/issue, some pressure toward congruity is likely to take place (Osgood and Tannenbaum 1955). For example, when an individual has a favorable attitude toward an endorser in an ad, and has a neutral attitude toward the product type advertised, it is likely that his/her attitude toward the advertised product becomes congruent with the attitude toward the endorser. In relation to source credibility, Osgood and Tannenbaum (1995) state that the more favorable the attitude toward the communicator becomes, the greater the effect of a positive assertion on an object/issue associated with the communicator, which results in a more favorable attitude toward the object/issue. On the other hand, if the communicator favorably rated by the receiver makes a negative assertion about the issue/object, the resulting negative attitude change is likely to be enhanced (Osgood and Tannenbaum 1955).

Applying this idea to advertising evaluations of Asian Americans, it is possible to argue that if Asian American consumers have an existing attitude toward their own ethnic identification, their attitudes may influence the evaluations of an ad featuring ethnic minority models. Specifically, one may be able to predict that high Asian American ethnic identifiers tend to rate ads with Asian models more favorably because the ad rating is congruent with their level of ethnic identification. As this example suggests, the congruency effect may have a notable influence on advertising evaluations of Asian Americans.

When measuring these cultural antecedents, it is recommended to include both individual-level items, such as one's own cultural values, and group-level items, such as one's membership in a geographical region or race to better understand ethnic consumer behavior. This is particularly important to better understand Asian American consumers because of their tendency to be group-oriented, which is based on collectivism (Hofstede 1997) and Confucianism (Keller and Kronstedt 2005). Because of the heavy emphasis on relationships and group-orientation in Asian culture, individuals in Asian culture are more prone to social pressure to follow the group norms and rules (Ang, Cheng, Lim and Tambyah 2001). Such group norms are likely to come from culture, and Triandis (1989) argues that culture influences every level of an individual's thinking and behavior, including his/her attitudes toward consumption and ads. Therefore, it is essential to combine both individual and group level variables to study ethnic minority consumers, particularly Asian American consumers.

Similarity vs. Familiarity

In order to investigate the effect of congruency, it is necessary to address its possible indicators. In terms of communication effectiveness, similarity and familiarity are often discussed as potential indicators that influence message effectiveness through perceived attractiveness of the source. According to McGuire (1985) and Ohanian (1990), message effectiveness is likely to depend on the source's similarity, familiarity, as well as attractiveness, to the receiver. In particular, perceived similarity appears to be an important indicator of cultural congruency that may have a strong impact on perceived model credibility and advertising evaluations.

Based on the proposed definition of ethnicity, the approach of the current study to the concept of similarity reflects the essence of physical characteristics, values, attitudes, and behaviors. Tversky and Gati (1978) describe similarity as common features between an individual and others, while the state of dissimilarity can be explained by distinctiveness between the individual and others. Whittler and DiMeo (1991) measured similarity with an actor in an ad with items that reflect lifestyle, appearance, cultural background, and values. The current study also incorporates the approach of Whittler and DiMeo (1991) to examine perceived similarity. In other words, perceived similarity between models presented in ads and consumers may be determined by perceived resemblance based on lifestyle, physical appearance, cultural background, and/or values.

Although somewhat related, the idea of familiarity differs from similarity. Yzerbyt, Judd, and Corneille (2004) state that one's familiarity with an object or issue is represented by the knowledge about the object or the issue. Such familiarity may be achieved by perceived resemblance between consumers and endorsers. However, while perceived familiarity does not necessarily require the resemblance (or similarity), it is based on previous knowledge about the object or the issue. In terms of this study, while Asian Americans may perceive an Asian model familiar because of the perceived similarity between themselves and the model which may have been built on their prior knowledge about the ethnic characteristics, they may not necessarily perceive the model similar because of perceived familiarity with the model due to the previous knowledge about the model's characteristics. Therefore, the focus is placed upon similarity as one of the cultural antecedents of perceived model credibility and advertising evaluations.

Congruency Research in Advertising

In discussions of the role of congruency in advertising evaluations, two types of congruency are relevant in advertising research: (1) congruency between personal attributes of the audience and attributes featured in advertisements such as models and endorsers (Whittler and DiMeo 1991; Green 1997; Appaih 2002; Chawla and Natarajan 1995; Gerristen, Korzilius, van Meurs and Gijsbers 2000); and (2) congruency between advertising attributes including endorsers' attributes and product advertised (Kahle and Homer 1985; Cohen 1992; Green 1997). Identification theory (Kelman 1961) helps to again explain this congruency phenomenon. For example, if an individual's characteristics are congruent with advertising attributes such as model/endorser, he/she is more likely to identify his/herself with the ad because such an attribute is similar and relevant to the person (Kelman 1961; Basil 1996; Appaih 2000). In such a case, source similarity and familiarity may enhance the congruent effect either in a positive or negative direction on perceived source credibility and/or advertising evaluations. In terms of congruency between one's own characteristics and advertising stimuli, several studies have shown support for this argument.

Zhang and Gelb (1998) examined appeals in American and Chinese ads to assess their relationship with the cultural values present in each country. The researchers also took product use conditions (socially visible use or private use) into account. The findings suggest that when advertising appeals are congruent with cultural values, the match is likely to result in favorable consumer attitudes toward the ads (Zhang and Gelb 1998). Similar results were found in a study that focused on Mexicans; advertisements

that portrayed local cultural values were rated more favorably and the resulting purchase intention was greater compared with advertisements with inconsistent cultural norms (Gregory and Munch 1997). Zhang and Gelb (1998) also pointed out that although cultural congruency is preferable to achieve favorable consumer attitudes in general, employing culturally incongruent advertising stimuli may still be acceptable depending on the product use, as long as there is congruency between the cultural appeal and product use conditions (Zhang and Gelb 1998). For example, it may be effective to use individualistic appeals in ads targeted toward Chinese audiences who are considered to be more collectivistic by nature, if the product use is individualistic (Zhang and Gelb 1998). Therefore, product type is also an important variable to assess when examining congruency issues in ads and will be discussed in a later section.

Another study conducted by Lwin and Wee (2000) focused on how audiences from three countries, namely Australia, Myanmar, and Singapore, evaluated TV commercials with various combinations of a spokesperson's race and the use of different English accents. Overall, the results indicate that Caucasian spokespersons having Western accents received the highest score in terms of advertising evaluations. Based on Kelman's (1961) identification theory, the researchers stated that the result may be due to the overwhelming media exposure to Caucasians world-wide that could increase the familiarity with Caucasians; therefore, the audience may have identified well with Caucasian models (Lwin and Wee 2000). Moreover, a study of Dutch consumers responses to TV commercials with English texts and voice-over reveals that in general, the use of English language in TV commercial was not appreciated by Dutch consumers,

and the resulting advertising responses were negative (Gerritsen, Korzilius, van Meurs, Gijbbers 2000). It appears that congruency between the cultural cues in ads and consumers' beliefs about these cues have a significant impact on their responses to advertising.

Several other studies have attempted to examine the effect of congruency between personal attributes of consumers, such as the race of an individual, and a model's race presented in ads. These studies have attempted to examine the effect of similarity/relevance with endorsers on advertising evaluations, and found that African Americans tended to perceive African American models in ads more similar than Caucasian models, and their responses to the ad with African American models were more favorable than ads with Caucasian models (Whittler and DiMeo 1991; Green 1997; Appaih 2000, Appaih 2001, Whittler and Spira 2002). Feldman (1984) also found that when congruency existed between the audience's race and communicator's characteristics including race, the audience was more likely to accept the information. Moreover, congruency between a consumer's race and a model's race appears to have a strong impact on a consumer's response to advertising even for members of an ethnic *majority* group. Chawla and Natarajan (1995) studied Caucasian consumers' evaluations of ethnic food advertisements. They manipulated the endorser's race (Asian/Caucasian) and gender in an ad of a soy sauce brand. Based on McGuire's (1985) familiarity effect on attitude changes along with source credibility (Hovland et al. 1953), the researchers discovered that when the race of the endorser was Caucasian, the level of perceived model credibility became higher compared with the case where the endorser's race was Asian (Chawla and

Natarajan 1995). This example suggests that it is possible for congruency between personal characteristics and the advertising cues to overpower congruency between the advertising cues and the advertised product type. Therefore, because Asian Americans may find Asian American models more familiar than Caucasian models due to the similar physical characteristics and/or cultural backgrounds, Asian American models may induce a more favorable attitude of Asian American consumers toward the ad and the brand than non-Asian models. Likewise, Asian Americans may regard Asian American models more familiar than Caucasian models, and therefore, they may perceive Asian American models more credible than Caucasian models.

However, a model's race and the type of product have also been shown to affect consumer responses to advertising. Several studies have been conducted about the influence of the image of an endorser or a spokesperson in an ad on consumer responses to advertisements. The match-up effect, proposed by Kahle and Homer (1985) to understand the effect of celebrity endorsers, argues that the effectiveness of communication can be enhanced by a match between the message and/or appeal communicated by the celebrity endorser's image and the advertised product. Based on this argument, Kamins and Gupta (1994) found that the more congruent the endorser's image and product type, the more likely that viewers perceive the spokesperson as more believable and attractive and the more favorable consumers' attitudes toward the advertised product because there was consistency between the advertised product and the spokesperson's image. A similar finding was reported by O'Mahony and Meenaghan (1998), stating that when the celebrity endorser's expertise matches with the product

advertised, consumer evaluations of the ad are more favorable than when there is not a match between the two agents.

Green's study (1997) on African American female consumers' reactions to ads with African American and Caucasian American models suggests that there is an interaction effect of product type; when African American models were featured in racially-charged product ads such as skin foundation, the advertising evaluation of African American females were more positive than Caucasian models. Another study which examined this type of congruency focused on Caucasian consumers. Cohen (1992) found that when Asian American models advertised a technology-related product, the advertising rating by Caucasian consumers was greater compared with other product types. In this case, a stereotype of Asians being more competent in the field of technology, and its congruency with the product type may have affected perceived model credibility (particularly the expertise component of perceived model credibility), and therefore, positively influence the favorability of the ad. Hence, it is possible to suggest that two types of congruency, in addition to the other cultural variable of strength of ethnic identification are likely to mediate the effect of perceived model credibility. In fact, specific relationships with each of the credibility components can be predicted.

With regards to the relationship between congruency and perceived source trustworthiness, it is possible to argue that a positive congruency effect may lead to a positively-perceived trustworthiness of the source. As discussed earlier, Jones et al. (1990) found that when the race and gender of the salespeople were congruent with customers (in this case, African American), the customers tended to perceive the sales

associates more trustworthy than Caucasian sales associates. Hence, in this study, Asian Americans may find Asian models in ads more trustworthy than Caucasian models because there is a match between their own race and the model's race.

A similar positive congruency effect may take place on perceived attractiveness of Asian American models. Brewer (1979) argued that individuals tend to compare and categorize others as well as themselves either as in-group or out-group based on criteria such as race, age, and lifestyle, and they tend to evaluate in-group people who are similar to themselves more favorably than out-group people who are dissimilar. Because there is a larger social distance between an individual and members of the out-groups, he/she is likely to rely on positive bias toward members of their in-group when they make comparisons and/or evaluations (Brewer 1979; Green, 1999). Also, McGuire (1985) argued that source attractiveness in relation to message effectiveness and communication tends to depend on the source's familiarity, similarity, and overall attractiveness. If Asian American consumers find Asian models more familiar and similar to themselves, they may find Asian models attractive, resulting in favorable perceived source credibility and advertising evaluations. Based on this assumption, it is possible to argue that due to the social distance between Asian Americans and Caucasian Americans, Asian Americans may be more prone to have a positive bias on Asian American models in advertisements if they have a stronger sense of ethnic identity. Or, they may simply become positively biased toward Asian models because of the similar physical appearance, resulting in a higher rating for perceived model attractiveness.

In terms of the relationship between the source's expertise and congruency effect,

it is likely that congruency between advertising cues such as model's race and product type positively influences the resulting advertising evaluations. Green (1997) found when African American models were featured in an ad for skin foundation, a racially-charged product, the resulting advertising evaluations and purchase intentions of African American consumers tended to be more favorable than those for ads with Caucasian models. It appears that in this case, because race is relevant in selecting the product, consumers tend to make the connection between the race of the models and the product type, and find the models having more expertise in the product category when their race is similar to that of the models. As a result, the perceived model credibility may be increased due to the congruency effect, and positive attitude changes may take place.

Based on these previous studies, we can argue that Asian Americans may find the model of the same race more trustworthy, with greater expertise, and more attractive and therefore more credible when the model is featured with race-related products such as cosmetics. In other words, Asian American consumers may find an Asian American model in the ad more credible if there is congruency between their own personal attributes and the model in the ad, as well as congruency between the advertised product and the model's expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Based on these assumptions, the following hypotheses on perceived model credibility are proposed.

CHAPTER TWO

HYPOTHESES

Ethnic Identification

According to Kelman's (1961) identification theory, a positive identification process takes place when an individual finds familiarity and/or similarity with an object. In particular, if an individual has a reciprocal role relationship with his/her group, and finds the relationship acceptable for defining him/herself, he/she tends to accept the influence of the group (Kelman 1961). Hence, Asian Americans may go through a positive identification process when they see an Asian model in an advertisement. Additionally, if Asian American consumers have a reciprocal role relationship with their ethnic group, they may be more prone to accept the influence of another person from the group, such as an Asian American model in an advertisement, if he/she finds the model relevant and similar to him/herself. Previous studies also found that the degree of ethnic identification tends to influence the advertising responses of ethnic minority consumers, but not necessarily for members of the majority group (Whittler and DiMeo 1991; Green 1997; Appaih 2001). Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1: Asian American consumers will rate the ad with Asian models more favorably than the ad with Caucasian models.

H1a: Caucasian consumers will not rate the ad with Caucasian models more favorably than the ad with Asian models.

H2: Asian American consumers' ethnic identification will be positively correlated with their attitudes toward advertisements with Asian American models.

Perceived Similarity

The perceived similarity with a model in an advertisement is considered to affect a consumer's ethnic identification process (Whittler and DiMeo 1991; Green 1997; Appaih 2000) and perceived source credibility (McGuire, 1985; Ohanian, 1990). In particular, a positive identification process that results in acceptance of the influence from the endorser in an ad may be due to perceived similarity with the endorser. Also, regarding communication effectiveness, perceived source attractiveness, one of three components of source credibility, can be influenced by perceived similarity with the source (McGuire 1985). Likewise, the other two components of source credibility, source expertise and trustworthiness, may be influenced by perceived similarity with the source. Therefore, the additional hypotheses related to perceived similarity can be stated.

H3: Perceived similarity with the model in the ad will be positively correlated with perceived source credibility.

H3a: There is a positive relationship between perceived similarity and i) attractiveness; ii) trustworthiness; and iii) expertise.

H4: Perceived similarity with the model in the ad will be positively correlated with the advertising evaluation.

H4a: Perceived similarity with the model in the ad will be positively correlated with ethnic identification.

Ad Schema Incongruity

Mandler (1982) argues that when there is a moderate mismatch between one's prior expectation about an issue/object and the actual value of the issue/object, the

resulting attitude toward the issue/object is likely to be more favorable compared with the cases of schema congruity and extreme schema incongruity. In the context of the current study, if Asian American consumers have a prior expectation of seeing Caucasian models in advertising in general, their attitudes toward an advertisement with Asian American models may be more favorable. This may occur because they may find this partial mismatch between their expectation about seeing Caucasian models in advertising and actually seeing an Asian American model in an advertisement as a positive situation.

Also, it is possible to argue that consumer ethnic identification may influence the degree of advertising schema incongruity because high ethnic identifiers may be more sensitive and conscious about not seeing Asian American models in general advertising, and when they actually see Asian models in ads, they may find them as a pleasant surprise. Also, advertising schema incongruity may result in positive evaluations of advertisements with Asian models by Asian American consumers because of the pleasant surprise to see Asian models in advertisements. Based on these examples, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H5: Asian Americans' ethnic identification will be positively correlated with advertising schema incongruity.

H6: Advertising schema incongruity will be positively correlated with Asian American consumers' evaluations of advertisements with Asian American models.

Model Congruency

Osgood and Tannenbaum's (1955) congruency theory states that when there is congruency between an individual's expectation and/or frame of reference and the actual

object, a positive attitude change is likely to occur. In the current study, two types of congruency exists: 1) congruency between consumers' personal attributes and attributes featured in advertisements (Whittler and DiMeo 1991; Green 1997; Appaih 2001); and 2) congruency between advertising attributes such as models' attributes and the advertised products (Kahle and Homer 1995; Cohen 1992; Green 1997). In the context of the current study, we can argue that when Asian American models are used in the ad of racially-charged products, Asian American consumers may evaluate the models and the ad more favorably due to the congruency between the model's race and the product type, as well as congruency between their racial/ethnic background and models' race. On the other hand, previous findings imply that members of the majority group do not necessarily show preference for ads featuring racially-congruent models, regardless of the product type (Whittler and DiMeo 1991). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H7: Asian American consumers will find the ad with Asian models more favorable than Caucasian models when the models appear in the ad for a racially-charged product.

H7a: Caucasian American consumers will not find the ad with Caucasian models more favorable than the ad with Asian models when the models appear in the ad for a racially-charged product.

Model Credibility

In this study, cultural congruency relationships are hypothesized as influencing factors on the perceived credibility of the models. Specifically, congruency between

Asian Americans' own ethnicity and the models' race may affect the three factors of source credibility, *attractiveness*, *expertise*, and *trustworthiness* due to the similarity between these two groups. In addition, perceived expertise may be influenced by congruency between the models' race and the product type; when a product is based on and targeted toward their ethnicity and race, consumers may find models with their own race more credible as they may perceive the models' race as a representation of expertise. Based on these arguments, the following set of hypotheses are proposed regarding model credibility.

H8: Asian (Caucasian) Americans will find Asian (Caucasian) models in an ad more credible than Caucasian (Asian) models.

H8a: Asian Americans will find Asian models in an ad more attractive than Caucasian models.

H8b: Asian Americans will find Asian models in an ad as having more expertise than Caucasian models.

H8c: Asian American will find Asian models in an ad more trustworthy than Caucasian models.

H8d: Model's race will mediate the relationship between Asian American consumers' ethnic identification and perceived model credibility.

In addition, one's strength of ethnic identification may influence perceived model credibility and serves as an influencer in the cognitive processing of Asian American consumers. For example, if one goes through a positive identification process, he/she may be more likely to pay attention to racially congruent cues such as models'

race due to the physical and cultural similarity shared between themselves and models presented in the ad. In addition, such positive identification may enhance perceived model similarity, leading to more perceived credibility for the Asian model in the advertisement. The mediation effect of perceived similarity may also influence the relationship between ethnic identification and resulting advertising responses. As a result, the following hypotheses can be proposed.

H9: Perceived model similarity will mediate the relationship between Asian Americans' ethnic identification and perceived source credibility.

H10: Perceived model similarity will mediate the relationship between Asian Americans' ethnic identification and advertising evaluations.

Previous studies show that source credibility influences consumers' evaluations of *advertisements* (Kamins 1990; Kamins and Gupta 1994; Tripp et al. 1994; O'Mahony and Meenaghan 1998), *brands* (Till and Busler 1998), and *purchase intention* (Ohanian 1991). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H11: The degree of perceived model credibility is positively correlated with Asian American consumer attitudes toward a) advertisements, b), advertised brand, and c) purchase intention.

Attitudes toward Ad, Brand, and Purchase Intentions

Previous literature suggests that consumer attitudes toward an advertisement may influence their attitudes toward the advertised brand and the subsequent purchase decisions (Batra and Ray 1986; MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch 1989).

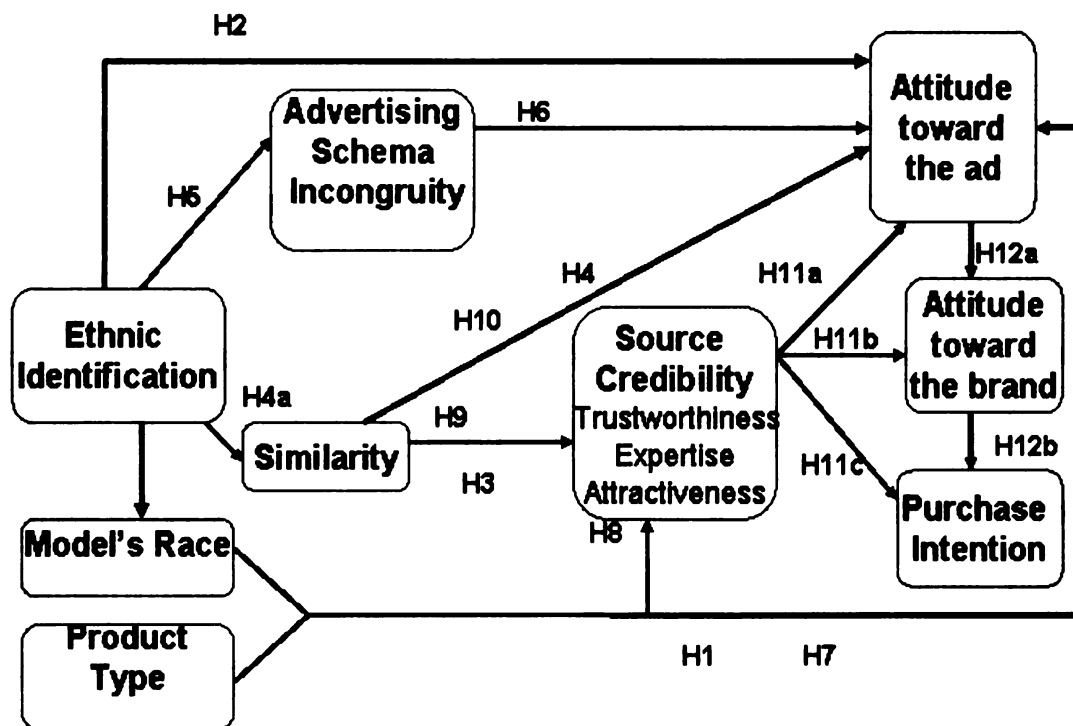
H12: Attitudes toward the advertisement will influence attitudes toward the brand, and this will influence attitudes toward purchase intentions.

Moreover, the level of product involvement will be treated as a covariate in this study as previous researchers argue that product involvement may influence perceived source credibility as well as the resulting advertising evaluations (Gotlieb and Sarel 1991; Mazursky and Shul 1992).

Conceptual Model: Asian American Consumers' Cognitive Processing

The cognitive processing of Asian American consumers can be explained in the following model.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model: Cultural Antecedents of Perceived Source Credibility



CHAPTER THREE

THE STUDY

The purpose of the current study is to examine the influence of the cultural antecedents such as the strength of ethnic identification, similarity, and cultural congruency of model, product, and consumer, on perceived model credibility. The study also examines the potential effects of these variables on Asian American consumers' responses to advertising. In addition, the study will examine how Asian American consumers' cognitive processing of perceived credibility led by the cultural antecedents, will affect advertising responses.

Despite previous research efforts to investigate source credibility and its effect on persuasion, the majority of such studies have treated the construct as an independent variable, and focused mainly on trustworthiness, expertise, or attractiveness of the source (Pornpitakpan 2004). However, exploring other potential factors that may influence source credibility will provide a better understanding of the mechanism of consumers' information processing and their reaction to advertising stimuli. Moreover, when studying ethnic consumers, the cultural influences on their attitudes and behaviors represented by model/product congruency and the strength of ethnic identification should not be neglected. Therefore, the underlying process of perceived model credibility will be proposed to assess the overall influence of relevant variables on responses to advertising. Specifically, Asian Americans' levels of ethnic identification will be examined along with cultural congruency factors to understand their relationships with perceived source credibility.

Since endorser credibility can influence consumer advertising evaluations (Ohanian 1990), it is important for marketers to understand the mechanism of source credibility in order to produce effective advertisements. Given changes in the U.S. population and the trend of global marketing, it is essential to better understand the credibility construct based on cultural variables. Each ethnic community group is unique and different from others. For example, Asian Americans have been considered the “model minority,” and typically have a higher level of income and education compared with the other ethnic minority and majority groups (Hurh and Kim 1989). Thus, the same outcomes and/or processes regarding perceived source credibility should not be assumed without systematical testing. The proposed study is also unique and important because the cultural variables being examined in this study have never been assessed within one model. Hence, it is hoped that the current study will contribute to enhance the current knowledge about source credibility and its interaction with ethnicity and culture.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHOD

Research Design

The current study used a 2 (model's race: Asian/Caucasian) x 2 (product type: racially-charged or not) x 2 (participants' race: Asian American/Caucasian) factorial experimental design (see Table 1). Four print ads where model's race and product type were manipulated were created for the study. A pretest was undertaken for the selection of brand name, models, and products to develop the manipulation and questionnaire. Forty six Asian and Caucasian students attending Michigan State University (MSU) were recruited for the pretest by the method of snowball sampling. As an incentive, a drawing for a \$20 online gift certificate was held.

For the main study, female Asian and Caucasian American students attending MSU were recruited with the assistance of the university's registrar's office. Female subjects were appropriate for the current study because of the possibility of using skin foundation as a racially-charged product category (Green 1997), which is an irrelevant product category for men in general.

The selection of Asian American females from the registrar's office was based on self ethnicity reports gathered by the university. In addition to the ethnicity classification provided by the registrar's office, the actual questionnaire also had a section where respondents could self-report their ethnicity to ensure accurate identification. The completed questionnaire with one of four ad manipulations, as well as a self-addressed and stamped envelope was mailed to 1,058 Asian American subjects from the registrar's

office. Two weeks after the original packages were sent, reminder postcards were sent to Asian American female subjects by the registrar's office. A total of 143 Asian American responses were collected in three weeks, which resulted in a response rate of 13.5 percent. In addition, data from 121 female Caucasian American students were collected as a control group by visiting several classes offered by the Department of Advertising, Public Relations, and Retailing at MSU. The survey was administrated in class, and the data were collected from all of the students in the classes visited. However, only responses from female Caucasian and Asian American students were used for the data analysis. Therefore, the total initial number of participants was 264.

The method of a mail questionnaire to recruit female Asian Americans was used rather than administering the survey on site (such as, administering the survey at a cultural/ethnic organization) because Asian Americans who belong to such organizations may have a greater degree of ethnic identification compared with those who do not participate in such organizations. In order to avoid smaller variance in ethnic identification, mailing the questionnaire with the assistance of the registrar's office was helpful to equally obtain data from both high and low Asian American ethnic identifiers. Moreover, a similar "Caucasian" organization did not exist. As an incentive, the participants who completed and returned the survey were entered into a drawing with a chance to win one of four \$50 gift certificates.

Table 1: Experimental Design

	Asian model/ Racially-charged product	Asian model/ Non racially-charged product	Caucasian model/ Racially-charged Product	Caucasian model/ Non racially-charged product
Asian American Consumers				
Caucasian Consumers				

Stimuli

Four full-color magazine ads where model's race and product type were manipulated were created for the main study. The models, the brand name, and the product type were pre-tested. A total of 27 Asian and 19 Caucasian students attending MSU volunteered to participate in the pretest. They were asked to rate the attractiveness of a series of both Asian and Caucasian American models, and the degree to which product categories (out of 14 potential product categories) sounded racially-charged. Racially-charged products were defined as products that an individual's race would be important to select the product, such as the physical features of skin color or the texture of hair. Skin foundation, for example, can be considered as a racially-charged product because one's race is likely to influence the color selection. For racially-charged products, items such as skin foundation, shampoo, and hair-coloring products were used for the pretest. For non-racially-charged products, products such as perfume, jewelry, an iron, and soft drinks were tested in the pretest.

For pretesting the models, all models were dressed similarly and were

photographed in a similar pose. The models chosen for the main study (one Asian and one Caucasian American) were selected based on similar ratings of attractiveness measured by a 7-point Likert scale proposed by Ohanian (1990). The participants rated the models similarly attractive (Asian model $M=5.29$; Caucasian model $M=5.08$; $t=1.73$, $df=43$, $p>.05$). The brand name, A/Z, was selected as the most racially-neutral brand name ($M=2.86$) out of 10 potential brand names. For product selection, skin foundation was selected as the most racially-charged product ($M=5.81$), and an iron ($M=1.40$) was selected as a non-racially-charged product ($t=33.43$, $df=43$, $p<.001$). The pretest results indicated that no two product categories were equally in terms of product involvement; therefore, this variable was treated as a covariate in the following hypothesis testing. Examples of the four ads created for the final survey are shown in Appendix.

Measures

Independent Variables: Ethnic identification was measured with the 18-item Likert-type scale developed by Xu et al. (2004). A factor analysis with a varimax rotation was conducted, and the first factor consisted of five attitudinal items such as “I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group,” “I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background,” and the second factor consisted of seven behavioral items such as “I prefer to hang out with friends from my own ethnic group,” “I prefer watching TV channels or shows that are relevant to my ethnic group,” and “I frequently read newspapers and magazines that are targeted to my ethnic group (Xu et al. 2004). In order to have an ethnic identification measure that reflects both attitudinal and behavioral aspects, these two factors were combined and used as a 12-item ethnic identification scale ($\alpha=.85$).

Forty-eight percent of the total variance was explained by these two factors. In addition, perceived model similarity was measured with a four-item Likert-type scale originally created by Whittler and DiMeo (1991). The scale included questions such as “the model’s overall lifestyle is similar to mine,” “Cultural background is similar to mine,” and “Basic values are similar to mine,” and the scale was found to be reliable ($\alpha=.79$).

Ad schema incongruity was measured with a Likert-type scale created for this study, which is anchored by four items such as “Seeing Asian American models in ads is very common (reverse-coded),” “It is unusual to see Asian American models in advertising,” “I am surprised to see Asian Americans in advertisements,” and “In general, advertisements rarely feature Asian Americans.” The higher the score was, the more that ad schema incongruity existed in respondents’ mind because the higher score indicated that respondents did not expect to see Asian models in advertisements, which may have been regarded as a pleasant surprise for Asian American consumers. The scale was found to be reliable ($\alpha=.77$).

Model credibility was measured by a 15-item semantic differential scale developed by Ohanian (1990), which included items such as attractive/unattractive, trustworthy/untrustworthy and knowledgeable/unknowledgeable. The overall scale was found to be reliable ($\alpha=.88$) and internally consistent with three factors with five items each: attractiveness ($\alpha=.82$), trustworthiness ($\alpha=.87$), and expertise ($\alpha=.86$).

Dependent Variables: Two of the three dependent variables, attitude toward ad (6 items, $\alpha=.82$) and attitude toward brand (9 items, $\alpha=.92$) were measured by a 7-point semantic differential scale using items developed by MacKenzie et al. (1986). Purchase intention

was measured by a combination of three items from the 7-point scale developed by Putrevu and Lord (1994) and three original items created for the current study ($\alpha=.86$). Also, the level of product involvement was measured by a combination of the 5-item semantic differential scale by Zaichokowsky (1986) and one item created for this study ($\alpha=.93$), and used as a covariate because previous literature suggests that product involvement can influence source credibility and the variable has an effect on advertising evaluations (Gotlieb and Sarel 1991; Mazursky and Shul 1992). Demographic items that were measured include age, income, self-report ethnic identity and the strength of ethnic identity, education level, major, and nationality.

Other Measures

For the purpose of the manipulation check of model's race, participants were asked to identify the racial background of the model featured in the ad. To rate model's attractiveness, Ohanian's (1990) model attractiveness scale was used. Also, two dichotomized questions that ask whether or not participants have seen the model or the brand previously were included in the main survey. In addition, participants were asked to rate the degree to which they perceive the product portrayed in the ad was racially-charged by using a seven-point semantic differential scale.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

Of the 143 responses from Asian American females, 27 participants identified themselves as Asian Indians. Since the operational definition of Asian Americans proposed for the this study did not include Asian Indians as Asian Americans, these cases were discarded from the final analysis. Therefore, the sample size was down to 237 (116 Asian Americans; 121 Caucasian Americans). All eight conditions had a cell size greater than 20, which is essential to ensure statistical power (Table 2).

Table 2: Numbers of Cases per Manipulation

	Asian model/ Racially-charged product	Asian model/ Non racially-charged product	Caucasian model/ Racially-charged Product	Caucasian model/ Non racially-charged product
Asian American Respondents	32	31	27	26
Caucasian Respondents	25	30	33	32

The majority of participants were in their 20s, with the largest group being age 20 and under (49.8 percent), followed by 21 to 30 years of age (45.1 percent). Approximately 92 percent of the subjects were full-time undergraduate students. Ninety percent of all participants were U.S. citizens, and 10 percent were permanent residents (greencard holders). Seventy-three percent of the participants were born in the U.S., with approximately 45 percent being third generation or beyond.

Regarding Asian American ethnic groups, Chinese Americans were the largest group (27.6 percent), followed by Korean Americans (22.4 percent), Vietnamese Americans (20.7 percent), Filipino Americans (13.8 percent), Japanese Americans (10.3 percent), and others (5.2 percent). Eighty-four and a half percent of the Asian American participants were U.S. citizens, and 15.5 percent held permanent resident status. About fifty percent of the Asian American participants were born in the U.S., while 50 percent was born abroad. In terms of generation, 45.7 percent of the Asian Americans answered that they were the first generations, followed by those indicating second generations (19 percent). See Table 3 for details on demographic information.

Table 3: Asian and Caucasian American Sample Characteristics

Asian Americans		Caucasian Americans	
Legal Status			
U.S. Citizen	84.5%	U.S. Citizen	96.7%
Permanent Resident	15.5%	Permanent Resident	2.5%
Born in the U.S.			
Yes	50.4%	Yes	95.8%
No	49.6%	No	4.2%
Generation			
1 st Generation	45.7%	1 st Generation	7.5%
2 nd Generation	19.0%	2 nd Generation	10.0%
3 rd Generation +	13.8%	3 rd Generation +	85.8%
Not a U.S. Citizen	13.8%	Not a U.S. Citizen	2.5%

Manipulation Checks

All participants who saw the ad with the Asian model correctly identified the model's race, while one out of 119 participants who saw the ad with the Caucasian model incorrectly identified the model's race; therefore, this misidentified case was discarded from the actual analysis, and the final sample size was 236 (116 Asian Americans and 120 Caucasian Americans). A t-test was conducted to check the product type manipulation, and skin foundation ($M=5.81$) was perceived more racially-charged compared with an iron ($M=1.40$, $t=33.43$, $df=236$, $p<.01$). Another set of t-tests on product type was performed on each ethnic group, and both Asian Americans (skin foundation $M=5.69$, an iron $M=1.25$, $t=28.46$, $df=115$, $p<.01$) and Caucasian Americans (skin foundation $M=5.91$, an iron $M=1.25$, $t=28.46$, $df=119$, $p<.01$) found the products to be significantly different.

In addition to the manipulation check on product type, participants' level of product involvement for the selected products was also tested using a t-test, and the result indicated that participants were more involved with skin foundation ($M=4.08$) than an iron ($M=3.54$, $t=2.71$, $df=231$, $p<.01$). Specifically, Caucasian American participants were more involved with skin foundation ($M=4.33$) than an iron ($M=3.69$, $t=2.24$, $df=117$, $p<.01$) while there was no statistical difference between skin foundation and an iron in terms of the level of product involvement for Asian American participants. Therefore, product involvement was used as a covariate in the actual hypothesis testing.

Another manipulation check was performed on perceived model attractiveness. Both Asian and Caucasian models were perceived similarly attractive (Asian $M=5.29$,

Caucasian $M=5.08$, $t=1.74$, $df=232$, $p>.05$). Therefore, it is concluded that the manipulation checks were successful.

Overview of the Main Findings

To provide an overview of the main findings, two sets of ANCOVA tests were performed. The first set includes three ANCOVA tests using model's race and product type as the independent variables, and ethnic identification, ad schema incongruity, and perceived similarity as the covariates, and perceived model credibility as the dependent variable. First, an ANCOVA test was performed on all samples (Table 4a). Two additional ANCOVA tests were administrated on Caucasian (Table 4b) and Asian (Table 4c) samples separately.

Table 4a: ANCOVA Results on Perceived Model Credibility (All Sample)

Source	df	F	Sig.
Ethnic Identification	1, 221	3.01	.08
Perceived Similarity	1, 221	23.78	.01*
Ad Schema Incongruity	1, 221	.12	.73
Model's Race	1, 221	1.91	.17
Product Type	1, 221	.04	.84
Model's Race x Product Type	1, 221	1.23	.27

* Significance at $p<.01$ level

Table 4b: ANCOVA Results on Perceived Model Credibility (Caucasian Sample)

Source	df	F	Sig.
Ethnic Identification	1, 109	2.25	.14
Perceived Similarity	1, 109	28.27	.01*
Ad Schema Incongruity	1, 109	.14	.71
Model's Race	1, 109	6.63	.01*
Product Type	1, 109	.97	.33
Model's Race x Product Type	1, 109	6.99	.01*

* Significance at $p < .01$ level

Table 4c: ANCOVA Results on Perceived Model Credibility (Asian Sample)

Source	df	F	Sig.
Ethnic Identification	1, 104	.05	.82
Perceived Similarity	1, 104	51.12	.01*
Ad Schema Incongruity	1, 104	1.66	.20
Model's Race	1, 104	.41	.52
Product Type	1, 104	.10	.75
Model's Race x Product Type	1, 104	.30	.58

* Significance at $p < .01$ level

As these results indicate, perceived similarity appears to have a strong effect on perceived model credibility for all samples. When both Asian and Caucasian respondents perceived the model in the ad similar to themselves, the rating for model credibility tended to be higher. For the Caucasian sample, model's race also has a main effect on

perceived model credibility. Generally, Caucasian respondents regarded the Asian model more credible than the Caucasian model. More specific findings will be discussed in the later result section of hypothesis testing.

Similarly, another set of ANCOVA tests were performed using attitudes toward ad as the dependent variable, model's race and product type as the independent variables, and ethnic identification, ad schema incongruity, and perceived similarity as the covariates. First, an ANCOVA test was performed on all samples (Table 5a). Then two additional ANCOVA tests were administered on Caucasian (Table 5b) and Asian (Table 5c) samples separately.

Table 5a: ANCOVA Results on Attitudes toward Ad (All Sample)

Source	df	F	Sig.
Ethnic Identification	1, 220	.39	.53
Perceived Similarity	1, 220	26.91	.01*
Ad Schema Incongruity	1, 220	.35	.55
Model's Race	1, 220	.09	.771
Product Type	1, 220	10.47	.01*
Model's Race x Product Type	1, 220	.59	.44

* Significance at $p < .01$ level

Table 5b: ANCOVA Results on Attitudes toward Ad (Caucasian Sample)

Source	df	F	Sig.
Ethnic Identification	1, 109	.65	.43
Perceived Similarity	1, 109	9.75	.01*
Ad Schema Incongruity	1, 109	.001	.99
Model's Race	1, 109	.001	.98
Product Type	1, 109	2.16	.14
Model's Race x Product Type	1, 109	.81	.37

* Significance at $p < .01$ level

Table 5c: ANCOVA Results on Attitudes toward Ad (Asian Sample)

Source	df	F	Sig.
Ethnic Identification	1, 104	.46	.50
Perceived Similarity	1, 104	14.43	.01*
Ad Schema Incongruity	1, 104	4.04	.05**
Model's Race	1, 104	.31	.58
Product Type	1, 104	10.17	.01*
Model's Race x Product Type	1, 104	.08	.78

*Significance at $p < .01$ level

** Significance at $p < .01$ level

For attitudes toward ad, perceived similarity has a main effect in all of the three samples. Interestingly, for the Asian American sample, ad schema incongruity and product type seems to have an effect on their attitudes toward ad. In the following section, each hypothesis that was stated earlier will be tested. However, several of the findings

will not be significant since ethnic identification is not significant in these ANCOVA test results.

Hypothesis Testing

H1 tested the effect of model's race on advertising evaluations. Two sets of ANCOVA were performed, with model's race as the independent variable, attitude toward the ad as the dependent variable, and the level of product involvement as a covariate. The results indicated that for attitude toward the ad, there was a statistically significant difference in terms of the mean scores of the ad evaluation between the Asian model ($M=4.13$) and the Caucasian model ($M=3.63$) ($F=6.42$, $df=1$, 227 , $p<.05$). In other words, Asian respondents liked the ads with the Asian model more than the ads with the Caucasian model. On the other hand, there was no significant difference between the rating for the ad regardless of the model's race on Caucasian American subjects (Caucasian model $M=4.11$, Asian model $M=4.17$; $F=.11$, $df=1$, 227 , $p>.05$). This finding was consistent with the hypothesis and the findings from the previous study by Whittler and DiMeo (1991). Therefore, H1 was supported by the data. Asian Americans liked the ads better with the Asian model while Caucasian Americans had no difference between either model presented on attitudes toward the advertisements.

H2 examines the correlation between Asian Americans' ethnic identification and their attitude toward advertisements with Asian American models. A bivariate correlation was conducted to test the relationship between ethnic identification and advertising evaluations only on Asian American respondents who saw the ad with the Asian model.

Table 6: Results of Descriptive Statistics and Correlation for H2 (n=62)

Variables	Ethnic Identification	Attitude toward Ad
Mean	4.07	4.15
Standard Deviation	1.11	1.10
Pearson's Correlation	-.017	
Significance (2-tailed)	.90	

The result was not statistically significant. Therefore, H2 was not supported by the data. There was no positive correlation between Asian Americans' ethnic identification and their advertising evaluations of the ad with the Asian model.

H3 tested the correlation between perceived model similarity and perceived model credibility. A bivariate correlation was performed to test the relationship on all of the cases.

Table 7: Results of Descriptive Statistics and Correlation for H3 (n=232)

Variables	Perceived Similarity	Perceived Credibility
Mean	3.24	4.64
Standard Deviation	1.29	.73
Pearson's Correlation	.50	
Significance (2-tailed)	.001*	

* Significance at $p < .01$ level

The result indicates a very strong positive correlation between the two variables with the statistical significance level of $p < .01$. Additionally, a regression was conducted to test the causality between perceived similarity as the independent variable and credibility as the dependent variable. The fit of the regression model (R^2) was .25,

meaning that 25 percent of the variance was explained by the regression equation, and the ANOVA result showed the overall significant causal relationship between perceived similarity and credibility ($F=77.0$, $df=1, 229$, $p<.01$). Also, the beta weight value is positive ($\beta=.28$, Table 8).

Table 8: Result of Regression for H3

Model	β	Standard Error	t	p
(Constant)	3.77	.11	32.78	.001*
Perceived Model Similarity	.28	.03	8.77	.001*

* Significance at $p<.01$ level

In addition, correlations were administrated using the three components of source credibility and perceived similarity (Table 9).

Table 9: Correlations between Similarity and Credibility Components (H3a)

	Attractiveness	Trustworthiness	Expertise
Mean	5.18	4.48	4.24
Standard Deviation	.91	.90	.99
Pearson's Correlation	.42*	.40*	.36*

* Significance at $p<.01$ level (2-tailed)

The results indicate that all of the credibility components highly correlated with perceived similarity with the significance level of .01 or smaller. Therefore, H3 supported by the data. Perceived model similarity is positively correlated with perceived model credibility.

H4 tested the relationship between perceived model similarity and advertising evaluations. According to the result from the correlation, there is a positive correlation between perceived model similarity and advertising evaluations ($r=.32$, $p<.01$).

Table 10: Results of Descriptive Statistics and Correlation for H4 (n=232)

Variables	Perceived Similarity	Attitude toward Ad
Mean	3.24	4.03
Standard Deviation	1.29	1.04
Pearson's Correlation	.32	
Significance (2-tailed)	.001*	

* Significance at $p<.01$ level

In addition to the correlation analysis, another regression was performed with perceived model credibility as the independent variable and attitude toward ad as the dependent variable. Eleven percent of the variance was explained by the regression model. The ANOVA result shows the overall significance ($F=26.71$, $df=1, 228$, $p<.01$). The beta weight of the independent variable was also positive and significant (Table 11). Therefore, H4 was supported. There was a positive relationship between perceived model similarity and advertising evaluations.

Table 11: Result of Regression for H4

Model	B	Standard Error	t	p
(Constant)	3.18	.18	18.10	.001*
Perceived Model Similarity	.26	.05	5.17	.001*

* Significance at $p < .01$ level

H4a tested the relationship between ethnic identification and perceived similarity.

A bivariate correlation was conducted to test the hypothesis.

Table 12: Results of Descriptive Statistics and Correlation for H4b (n=235)

Variables	Ethnic Identification	Perceived Similarity
Mean	4.39	3.25
Standard Deviation	1.04	1.29
Pearson's Correlation	.07	
Significance (2-tailed)	.32	

According to the result presented in Table 12, there was no significant correlation between ethnic identification and perceived model similarity. Therefore, H4a was not supported by the data. There was not a positive correlation between ethnic identification and perceived similarity.

H5 hypothesized the relationship between Asian Americans' ethnic identification and ad schema incongruity. To test H5, a bivariate correlation was performed on ad schema congruency Asian Americans' ethnic identification and ad schema incongruity. The result was not statistically significant ($r = .06$, $p > .05$). Hence, Asian Americans' ethnic identification was not positively correlated with ad schema incongruity.

Table 13: Results of Descriptive Statistics and Correlation for H5 (n=114)

Variables	Ad Schema Congruity	Ethnic Identification
Mean	4.95	4.15
Standard Deviation	1.27	1.11
Pearson's Correlation	.058	
Significance (2-tailed)	.57	

H6 predicts a positive correlation between ad schema incongruity and Asian Americans' attitude toward the ad with the Asian model. Ad schema incongruity was measured with a four-item scale where the higher score the more likely ad schema incongruity existed. In this case, ad schema incongruity is believed to exist in Asian Americans' mind when they do not expect to see Asian models in advertisements in general. Some degree of ad schema incongruity is said to trigger a pleasant surprise when ethnic minority members actually see models from their ethnicity in advertisements, leading to more favorable advertising evaluations (Dimofte et al. 2004).

Table 14: Results of Descriptive Statistics and Correlation for H6 (n=62)

Variables	Ad Schema Congruency	Attitude toward Ad
Mean	4.90	4.15
Standard Deviation	1.33	1.09
Pearson's Correlation	.14	
Significance (2-tailed)	.27	

As Table 14 suggested, the correlation coefficient was not statistically significant ($r=.14$, $p=.27$). Therefore, H6 was not supported. There was not a positive correlation between ad schema incongruity and Asian Americans' attitude toward the ad with the

Asian model.

H7 tests the simple effect of product type only on Asian American respondents. An ANCOVA was executed with model's race and product type as the independent variables, attitudes toward ad as the dependent variable, and product involvement as a covariate.

Table 15: Descriptive Statistics for Attitudes toward Ad

Asian American Respondents					Caucasian American Respondents			
Ad Type	Asian model x skin Foundation	Asian model x iron	Caucasian model x skin foundation	Caucasian model x iron	Asian model x skin foundation	Asian model x iron	Caucasian model x skin foundation	Caucasian model x iron
N	32	29	26	25	25	29	33	31
Mean	4.38	3.86	3.92	3.33	4.17	4.17	4.30	3.91
Std. Deviation	1.08	1.07	.80	.96	.97	1.08	.84	1.20

The result suggested that Asian American subjects evaluated the skin foundation ad with the Asian model more favorably ($M=4.38$) compared with the skin foundation ad with the Caucasian model ($M=3.92$), and the mean difference between the two conditions was statistically significant ($F=6.58$, $df=1, 225$, $p<.05$). The control group of Caucasian American participants was also examined using the same procedure (H7a). The result of the ANCOVA indicated that there was no statistical difference between the mean scores of Caucasian advertising evaluations regardless of the model's race and product type featured in the ads ($F=1.14$, $df=1, 225$, $p>.05$). This finding was expected as the previous literature suggested that Caucasian Americans tended not to show the difference in

advertising responses regardless of the model's race featured in the advertisements (Whittler and DiMeo 1991). Therefore, H7 was supported by the data. While Asian American consumers found the ad with the Asian model more favorable than Caucasian models when the models were featured in the ad for a racially-charged product; however, Caucasian American consumers did not show preference for the racially-charged product ad with racially-congruent models.

H8 examines the effect of model's race on perceived model credibility. Two sets of ANCOVA were conducted on each ethnic group with the level of product involvement as a covariate.

Table 16: Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Model Credibility for H8

Asian American Participants								
	Asian Model (n)				Caucasian Model (n)			
Constructs	Cred	Attract	Trust	Expert	Cred	Attract	Trust	Expert
Mean	4.73 (62)	5.22 (62)	4.66 (62)	4.30 (62)	4.38 (49)	4.87 (51)	4.05 (49)	4.18 (50)
Std. Deviation	.93	.97	1.09	1.17	.62	.97	1.01	.67
Caucasian American Participants								
	Asian Model (n)				Caucasian Model (n)			
Constructs	Cred	Attract	Trust	Expert	Cred	Attract	Trust	Expert
Mean	4.87 (55)	5.36 (55)	4.90 (55)	4.35 (55)	4.53 (64)	5.27 (63)	4.24 (64)	4.11 (64)
Std. Deviation	.67	.87	.95	.91	.55	.82	.57	.81

For Asian American participants, there was a statistical difference between mean scores of perceived model credibility between Asian and Caucasian models (Asian $M=4.73$, Caucasian $M=4.38$, $F=4.46$, $df=1, 224$, $p<.05$), and Asian American subjects perceived the Asian model in the ad more credible than the Caucasian model. Interestingly, for Caucasian American participants, a similar finding was obtained. Caucasian American participants also perceived the Asian model as more credible ($M=4.87$) than the Caucasian model in the ad ($M=4.53$, $F=9.57$, $df=1, 224$, $p<.01$). Therefore, while the hypothesis was supported by the data for the Asian American participants, it was not supported by the data for the Caucasian American participants. Asian Americans found the Asian model in the ads more credible than the Caucasian model, and so too did the Caucasian respondents.

H8a-c test the effect of model's race on the three factors that form the credibility construct for Asian Americans. Three sets of ANCOVA were administrated with model's race as the independent variable, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise, as the dependent variables, controlling for the level of product involvement.

Table 17: ANCOVA Results for H8a-c

	Mean Square	df	F	Sig.
Credibility (Product Involvement)	2.75 (4.10)	1, 108	4.46 (6.67)	.037* (.011)**
Attractiveness (Product Involvement)	2.96 (1.72)	1, 110	3.18 (1.85)	.07 (.18)
Expertise (Product Involvement)	.19 (5.06)	1, 108	.16 (4.27)	.69 (.041)*
Trustworthiness (Product Involvement)	8.99 (6.42)	1, 109	10.99 (7.87)	.001** (.006)**

*Significance at $p < .05$ level

** Significance at $p < .01$ level

Regarding H8a-b, Asian American participants perceived the Asian model neither more attractive ($F=3.18$, $df=1$, 229, $p > .05$) nor having more of an expertise ($F=.16$, $df=1$, 228, $p > .05$) than the Caucasian model in the ads. However, the result suggested that the Asian American participants did perceive the Asian model in the ad more trustworthy ($M=4.66$) than the Caucasian model ($M=4.05$, $F=10.99$, $df=1$, 229, $p < .01$).

Additionally, H8d hypothesizes that the model's race will mediate the relationship between Asian Americans' ethnic identification and perceived model credibility. To test this mediation effect, the method proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) was used. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), in order to claim the mediation effect of a variable, three conditions must be met: 1) the independent variable must affect the mediating variable; 2) the independent variable must affect the dependent variable; and 3) the mediating variable must affect the dependent variable. Also, the addition of the mediator to the relationship between the independent and dependent variables should

reduce the effect of the independent variable (Edwards and La Ferle 2003).

Since model's race is a dichotomous categorical variable, it was dummy-coded (1=Asian model, 0=Caucasian model) to be entered into the regression equations. For the second regression, a logistic regression method was used since the dependent variable (model's race) is categorical.

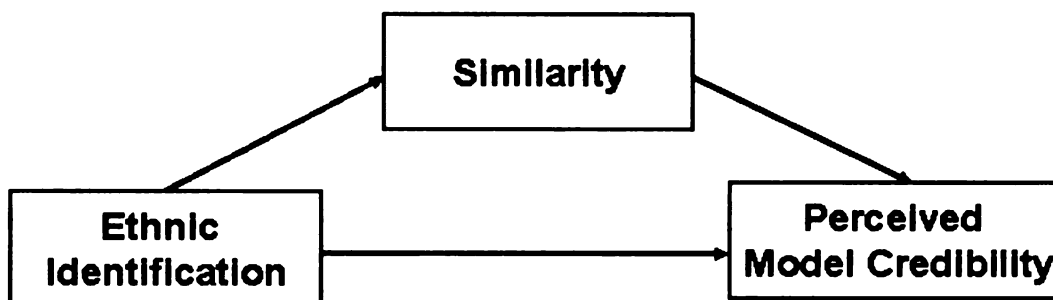
Table 18: Model's Race as a Mediator (H8d)

Independent Variable(s)	Dependent Variable	β	R^2	t	Sig.
Ethnic Identification	Credibility	.072	.009	.65	.32
Ethnic Identification	Model's race	-.13	.005	.59	.877
Ethnic Identification Model's race	Credibility	.08 .34	.05	1.17 2.12	.24 .03

The results indicated that ethnic identification did not have a significant effect on the mediator, model's race ($\beta = -.13$, $p > .05$), while model's race presented itself as a significant predictor of perceived model credibility ($\beta = .33$, $p < .05$). The third regression equation which tested both ethnic identification and model's race on perceived credibility, R^2 increased from .009 to .05, but only model's race remained as the significant predictors of perceived model credibility. Because ethnic identification did not predict the mediator, it is concluded that model's race did not serve as a mediator between ethnic identification and perceived credibility. Therefore, H8 and H8c were supported. Asian American consumers found Asian models in an ad more credible overall, and it appears that trustworthiness was driving the finding.

H9 tests the mediation effect of perceived similarity between Asian Americans' ethnic identification and perceived credibility.

Figure 2: Similarity as a Mediator between Ethnic Identification and Credibility



Three regression analyses were conducted with ethnic identification as the independent variable and perceived model credibility as the dependent variable, using the data from Asian American participants.

Table 19: Similarity as a Mediator of Ethnic Identification and Credibility

Independent Variable(s)	Dependent Variable	β	R^2	t	Sig.
Ethnic Identification	Credibility	.071	.009	1.01	.32
Ethnic Identification	Similarity	.13	.01	1.05	.30
Ethnic Identification Similarity	Credibility	.03 .31	.28	.42 6.34	.67 .001*

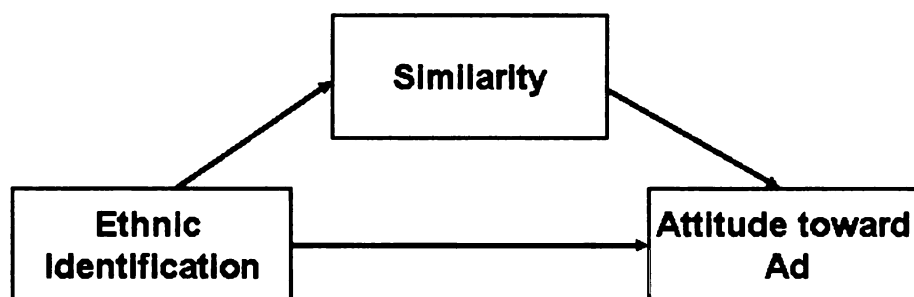
*Significance at $p < .01$ level

The results indicated that ethnic identification did not have a significant effect on the mediator, similarity ($\beta = .13$, $p > .05$). Likewise, ethnic identification did not have a significant effect on perceived model credibility, either ($\beta = .07$, $p > .05$). The third regression equation which tested both ethnic identification and similarity on perceived credibility, R^2 increased from .04 to .28, and only similarity remained as the significant

predictors of perceived model credibility. Because ethnic identification failed to significantly predict both the mediator and the dependent variable, it is concluded that similarity did not serve as a mediator between ethnic identification and perceived credibility. Therefore, H9 was not supported. Similarity did not mediate the relationship between Asian Americans' ethnic identification and perceived model credibility.

H 10 predicts the mediating effect of perceived similarity in the relationship between Asian Americans' ethnic identification and attitudes toward ad. To test the mediation effect, three regression analyses were conducted.

Figure 3: Similarity as a Mediator between Ethnic Identification and Aad



The results of three regression analyses suggest the similar pattern seen in testing for H9. The first regression equation tests the effect of ethnic identification on advertising evaluations, and ethnic identification does not appear to be a significant indicator of attitudes toward ad ($\beta = -.02$, $t = -.21$, $p > .05$). The second equation does not suggest significance of ethnic identification on the mediator, similarity, either. Lastly, the mediator is added to the first regression equation. The results show that while R^2 is increased from .001 in the first equation to .14 in the third regression equation, and

similarity is the significant predictor of attitudes toward ad ($\beta=.28$, $t=4.22$, $p<.01$). Based on these analyses it can be stated that because the independent variables of ethnic identification failed to predict the mediator and attitudes toward ad, there was no mediation effect of perceived similarity. Therefore, H10 was not supported. Similarity did not mediate the relationship between Asian Americans' ethnic identification and attitudes toward ad.

Table 20: Tests of Similarity as a Mediator (H10)

Independent Variable(s)	Dependent Variable	β	R²	t	Sig.
Ethnic Identification	Aad	-.02	.001	-.21	.83
Ethnic Identification	Similarity	.13	.01	1.05	.30
Ethnic Identification Similarity	Aad	-.06 .28	.14	-.67 4.22	.51 .001*

*Significance at $p<.01$ level

H11 predicts positive correlations between Asian Americans' perceived model credibility and their attitudes toward a) advertisements; b) advertised brands; and c) purchase intention.

Table 21: Correlations between Perceived Model Credibility and Aad, Ab, and PI

	Attitude toward Ad	Attitude toward Brand	Purchase Intention
N	110	111	112
Pearson's Correlation	.41*	.42*	.47*
Significance (2-tailed)	.001	.001	.001

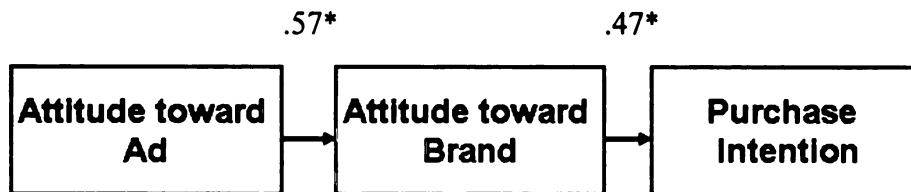
*Significance at $p<.001$

For all of the variables, perceived model credibility appears to have

significantly positive correlations at the significance level of $p < .001$ (Table 21). Hence, the data support H11. The degree of perceived model credibility is positively correlated with Asian American participants' attitudes toward a) advertisements; b) advertised brand; and c) purchase intentions.

Lastly, H12 tests the relationships between attitudes toward ad, attitudes toward brand, and purchase intentions. The relationship can be illustrated in the following.

Figure 4: Relationships between Aad, Ab, and PI



*Significance at $p < .01$ level

A path analysis using all participants was performed. Attitudes toward ad was a significant predictor of attitudes toward brand ($r = .57$, $p < .01$), and attitudes toward brand had a significant path coefficient ($r = .47$, $p < .01$). The fit of the model was assessed by using the chi-square goodness-of-fit test. The chi-square value was 41.56 ($df = 25$, $p < .05$). As chi-square values tend to be significant as the sample size becomes larger, results from additional goodness-of-fit tests should be taken into consideration when assessing a model's fit (Byrne 2001). The additional test results of NFI and CFI both presented the values greater than .95 (Table 22). These values range from zero to 1.00, and a value

greater than .90 suggests a well-fitting model (Byrne 2001).

Table 22: Goodness-of-fit Test Results for H12

χ^2	df	ρ	χ^2/ρ	NFI	CFI
41.56	25	.02	1.66	.97	.99

Therefore, H12 is supported by the data. Attitudes toward the advertisement will influence attitudes toward the brand, and this influences attitudes toward purchase intentions.

Post Hoc Analyses of Cultural Antecedents of Perceived Model Credibility and Aad

To better understand what drives Asian Americans' perceived model credibility and resulting attitudes toward ad, two regression analyses were conducted. First, a multiple regression was administrated with ethnic identification, ad schema incongruity, and similarity as independent variables, and perceived model credibility as a dependent variable. The regression equation can be stated as $\text{Credibility} = 3.13 + .02X^1(\text{ethnic identification}) + .07X^2(\text{ad schema incongruity}) + .32X^3(\text{similarity}) + e$. 29 percent of the variance was explained by this model, and the equation appeared to have an overall significant fit ($F=14.50$, $df=3, 107$, $p<.01$).

Table 23: Post Hoc Analysis of Cultural Antecedents of Perceived Credibility

Model	B	Standard Error	t	p
(Constant)	3.13	.40	7.91	.001*
Ethnic Identification	.02	.06	.32	.752
Ad Schema Incongruity	.07	.05	1.28	.21
Similarity	.32	.05	6.49	.001*

*Significance at $p < .01$ level

As the results presented in Table 23, the only significant predictor of perceived model credibility was similarity, and both ethnic identification and ad schema incongruity had very small effects on perceived model credibility for Asian Americans.

Another regression was conducted using the same independent variables as the first regression, and attitudes toward ad as the dependent variable. The regression equation is $\text{Attitude toward ad} = 2.49 - .07X^1(\text{ethnic identification}) + .15X^2(\text{ad schema incongruity}) + .30X^3(\text{similarity}) + e$. 17.3 percent of the variance was explained by this model, and the equation has an overall significant fit ($F=7.48$, $df=3, 107$, $p < .01$).

A close examination of the regression coefficients reveal that in this model, while ethnic identification still remains as a non-significant predictor of attitudes toward ad, both ad schema incongruity and similarity appear to predict attitudes toward ad.

Table 24: Post Hoc Analysis of Cultural Antecedents of Aad

Model	B	Standard Error	t	p
(Constant)	2.49	.55	4.56	.001*
Ethnic Identification	-.07	.08	-.80	.43
Ad Schema Incongruity	.15	.07	2.00	.047**
Similarity	.30	.07	4.52	.001*

*Significance at $p < .01$ level

**Significance at $p < .05$ level

The results from these two post hoc regression analyses suggest the powerful influence of perceived similarity on both perceived model credibility and advertising evaluations for Asian Americans, as well as the non-significant influence of Asian American ethnic identification.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

The current study attempted to investigate the influence of ethnic identification and cultural congruency with the model, product, and consumer, on perceived model credibility and Asian American consumers' advertising evaluations. By doing so, the current study sought to contribute to better learning the underlying mechanisms of Asian American consumers' cognitive processing of advertising stimuli with cultural/ethnic cues.

While Asian Americans begin to be recognized as an important and growing consumer group in the U.S., very few studies concerning this consumer group have been conducted thus far. The data collected for this study supported some of the hypotheses, and it is hoped that these findings will help both researchers and practitioners to achieve a better understanding of this ethnic consumer group as well as to create effective communication campaigns targeted toward the group. This section focuses on several notable and important findings that characterize the significance of the study.

Model Congruency Effect on Advertising Evaluations of Asian Americans

One of the major findings in this study is the effect of model congruency on perceived model credibility and advertising evaluations of Asian American consumers. In general, Asian American participants in this study tended to perceive the Asian model as more credible than the Caucasian model (H8), and preferred the ads featuring the racially-congruent model (H1), particularly when the product type was racially-charged (H7). This finding is similar to the previous findings concerning other ethnic minority

groups such as African Americans (Green 1997). Also, the phenomenon seemed to be clearer particularly when the participants perceived similarity between the model and themselves. In other words, the more Asian American participants perceived the similarity between themselves and the models presented in the ad, the more likely that they saw the models as credible (H3 and H3a). In addition, the degree of perceived model credibility positively correlated with advertising favorability (H4). The results from the post hoc analyses on cultural antecedents of perceived credibility and advertising responses also revealed that among three major cultural antecedents examined in the current study, namely, ethnic identification, ad schema incongruity, and perceived similarity, similarity was a significantly strong driving factor of these dependent variables.

As these results suggest, the congruency effect between the advertising stimuli of the model's race, and consumers' race and/or ethnicity greatly influenced advertising outcomes of Asian American consumers. The findings from the current study correspond with the previous findings on other ethnic minority consumer groups and their advertising evaluations (Appaih 2000; Green 1997; Dontshu and Cherian 1992; Whittler and Spira 2002). In this regard, although replications should be conducted to confirm this phenomenon, it is possible to argue that among the cultural variables examined in this study, congruency plays a major role in predicting advertising evaluations of Asian American consumers.

The in-group bias theory, originally proposed by Brewer (1979) may be helpful to understand this phenomenon. The theory argues that individuals tend to compare and

categorize others as well as themselves either as in-group or out-group based on criteria such as race, age, and lifestyle, and they tend to evaluate in-group people who are similar to themselves more favorably than out-group people who are dissimilar (Brewer, 1979; Wilder, 1981). As a result, Asian American respondents in this study may have perceived the Asian model as more credible due to the perceived similarity, and the following advertising evaluations tended to be more positive compared with the ads featuring the Caucasian model.

In the current study, the scale used to measure perceived model credibility includes items on physical appearances, values, cultural backgrounds and lifestyle. For the pair of the models selected in the main study, both Asian and Caucasian models appear to be in their 20s, and their dress style also appears to be similar to that of the respondents. In addition to the perceived similarity due to physical appearances (such as race), the participants may have perceived the Asian model to be more similar than the Caucasian model because of the lifestyle or values portrayed in the ad. Combined with their in-group bias, the congruency effect that resulted from perceived similarity may have achieved a higher degree of perceived model credibility and favorability of ads featuring the Asian model. Needless to say, more studies are called for to learn more about the relationship between in-group bias and model congruency associated with Asian American consumers.

Absence of Model Congruency Effects on Advertising Outcomes of Caucasian Americans

This study also examined the advertising evaluations of female Caucasian American consumers as a control and comparison group. Interestingly, while the

congruency effect between advertising cues and Asian Americans' consumer characteristics apparently has a strong impact on the resulting perceived model credibility and advertising evaluations, model congruency does not appear to have an influence on Caucasian Americans' perceived model credibility and advertising outcomes (H1a and H7a). This phenomenon was consistent with Caucasian American participants throughout hypothesis testing.

One possible explanation to this trend can be related to the lack of ethnic distinctiveness among Caucasian Americans in the American society. Previous researchers have argued that ethnic or cultural cues in advertising tend to be more effective for members of ethnic minority groups because the salience of their ethnicity is enhanced due to the numerical minority status (Deshpande and Stayman 1994). Regarding Caucasian American consumers in general, they are still a numerical majority group in the U.S., and as Appaih (2000) argues, they may be less likely to be affected by ethnic or cultural cues in advertising due to the lesser degree of ethnic salience compared with other ethnic minority groups in the U.S.

Another interesting finding on Caucasian Americans' responses is that they found the Asian model more credible than the Caucasian model (H8). This may be due to positive Asian American stereotypes held by some members of the ethnic majority group. One of such positive stereotypes of Asian Americans is the image of Asian Americans as the model minority (Oyserman and Sakamoto 1997; Abreu, Ramirez, Kim and Haddy 2003). Caucasian Americans in this study may have regarded the Asian model as a representation of the model minority, thinking that Asian Americans are hardworking and

successful in academic or economic structures in the U.S. (Oyserman and Sakamoto 1997). Often, Asian Americans are portrayed as industrious and serious in advertisements (Taylor and Lee 1994). Caucasian respondents in this study may have been exposed to such portrayals of Asian Americans in general advertisements and therefore, they may have regarded the Asian model more credible than the Caucasian model.

Moreover, it is possible to argue that Caucasian respondents in the current study may have perceived the Asian model more similar to themselves than the Caucasian model because of the portrayed lifestyle, clothing, make-up, or age of the model. The model selection was based on the level of perceived attractiveness of both Asian and Caucasian models, and these variables, such as perceived lifestyle and appearance, were not tested in the model selection process. Therefore, it is suggested that future research will pay more attention to this outcome to learn about the perceptions of the majority on minority groups and how they are related to the advertising evaluations featuring ethnic minority models.

Effects of Cultural Antecedents of Perceived Model Credibility

While similarity, which can be considered an indication of congruency, was a significant indicator of perceived model credibility and resulting advertising evaluations of Asian Americans in the current study, the other hypothesized cultural antecedents, namely ethnic identification and ad schema incongruity, were not significant predictors of perceived model credibility. The post hoc analysis also revealed that ad schema incongruity was a significant predictor of advertising outcomes, which is similar to the previous study by Dimofte et al. (2004). However, ethnic identification did not present

itself as a significant indicator of advertising evaluations.

Several explanations are possible in these cases. In terms of ad schema incongruity and its effect on advertising evaluations but not on perceived model credibility (H6), the findings of the current study are plausible because all of the items used to measure ad schema incongruity asked about their expectations of Asian American models' appearances in advertisements in general, and did not ask questions specifically about the Asian model presented in the stimuli. Therefore, while this construct had a significant indication of advertising evaluations, it may have not had an impact on perceived model credibility. Future studies should consider including items about respondents' expectation to see an Asian model in specific ads used in a study, in addition to items on general expectations to see Asian models in advertisements.

Meanwhile, the non-significant influence of Asian Americans' ethnic identification on perceived model credibility (H4a) and advertising responses (H2) was the opposite of the previous findings of the effect of ethnic identification of other ethnic minority groups (Green 1997; Appaih 2000; Desphande, Hoyer and Donthu 1986; Donthu and Cherian 1992). This tendency may be related to the sample characteristics in this study.

First, the Asian sample was all university students, and they were probably more educated than the general Asian population, and likely to come from affluent families. In other words, these respondents tend to fit into the typical "model minority" stereotype (Oysterman and Sakamoto 1997). Therefore, they may not necessarily feel a need to be outward spoken about their ethnicity compared with other ethnic minority groups such as

African Americans and Hispanic Americans. In addition, because of their nature of collectivism (Hofstede 1997) and conformity motivation (Ang et al. 2001), Asian Americans in the current study may have been more leaning toward the mainstream group, and may have discouraged to be outspoken about their ethnicity and stand out from the mainstream group. Such a tendency may have influenced the lack of ethnic identification effect on perceived model credibility and advertising evaluations of Asian Americans.

Moreover, the Asian American population in the U.S. is quite small compared with African Americans or Hispanics whose ethnicity tends to be more salient in consumer behavior and advertising evaluations. As the population of Asian Americans increases, they may become more outspoken about their ethnicity, and it may influence their advertising evaluations and consumptions. Therefore, more research in the future is necessary as the population status of Asian American is likely to change due to their growth rate.

Another issue is related to Asian Americans' immigration background. The history of Asian immigration is shorter and the flux of Asian immigration has taken place more recently compared with African Americans. For example, in the current study, about 50 percent of the Asian American sample was non-U.S. born (although American now or permanent resident), and 46 percent considered themselves as the first generation in the U.S. Compared with other ethnic minority groups, particularly African Americans who are likely to consider themselves as beyond first or second generations, Asian Americans have a shorter history of being "American." Hence, such a different immigration

background may have contributed to the non-significant influence of Asian “Americans” ethnic identification of perceived model credibility and resulting advertising evaluations. Also, Agbayani-Siewert (2004) argues that Asian American groups are distinguished from other groups by characteristics including the level of acculturation. Acculturation also influences the transmission of beliefs and behaviors to other members of the cultural population (Lehman et al. 2004). Combined with Asian Americans’ collectivistic nature, the level of acculturation has a great potential to influence not only their own beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, but also those of the other members who share the same culture. Therefore, acculturation can be proposed as a potential predictor of perceived model credibility and advertising evaluations of Asian Americans.

Acculturation is defined as “the process of learning and adopting cultural traits, different from the ones with which the person was originally reared” (Ownbey and Horridge 1997, p. 3). This concept is often discussed in the study of ethnicity in advertising and marketing literature. Previous empirical studies suggest that the level of acculturation influences individuals’ various behaviors and perceptions ranging from consumer behavior (Wallendorf and Reilly 1983; Faber, O’Guinn and McCarty 1987; Kara and Kara 1996; Ownbey and Horridge 1997), and media consumption (Lee and Tse 1994) to advertising evaluations (Lee 1993; Khairulla, Tucker and Tankersley 1996). According to the statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), of 12 million Asian Americans, approximately 8 million of them were foreign-born, and apparently, the proportion of the first generation is extremely high among Asian Americans.

One of the indicators of the level of acculturation is the ability to speak the

English language (Lee 1993), and in fact, across different age groups, more than half of Asian Americans speak other languages than English (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). If an Asian American is not fluent in English but fluent in other Asian languages, he/she may be considered less acculturated to the U.S. society. On the other hand, if an Asian American can use only English, it is likely that he/she is beyond first or second generation, and more acculturated to the U.S. society. Therefore, the ability to use the English language as well as other languages may serve as a good indicator of acculturation. Based on these characteristics shared by Asian Americans in the sample, in the future studies, other cultural variables, such as the degree of acculturation, should be taken into consideration when investigating the cognitive processing of Asian American consumers' advertising responses in addition to ethnic identification.

Another issue on ethnic identification is related to the scale used in the current study. For this study, both attitudinal and behavioral factors were combined to create a general ethnic identification scale. However, when the mean scores of these factors were compared, the behavioral factor had a lower score ($M=3.25$) than the attitudinal factor ($M=5.40$, $t=18.03$, $df=114$, $p<.01$). The behavioral items included questions such as "I like ethnic movies or movies that portray my culture's background," and "I prefer watching TV channels or shows that are relevant to my ethnic group." However, there may be an infrastructure issue because there is a limited number of Asian radio/TV/movie programs in general, and therefore, the Asian American respondents may not have access to these outlets, resulting in a lower score of the behavioral ethnic identification factor. As a result, there may have been a discrepancy between the attitudinal and behavioral factors

of the ethnic identification, leading to different outcomes from those of other ethnic minority groups.

Such a discrepancy between attitudes and behaviors may be an indication of an identification (attitude) or recognition of being Asian, but not a subsequent need to act or behave differently to stand out, which has been discovered in previous research on African American or Hispanic consumers. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies use the attitude/behavioral ethnic identification scale on different ethnic minority groups including African and Asian Americans to test these different ideas.

Perceived Model Credibility and the Influence of Each Component

Perceived model credibility is important to understand Asian American consumers' advertising evaluation process. The data from this study showed a positive correlation between perceived model credibility and attitudes toward the ad, brand, and purchase intention (H11). In addition to the overall credibility construct, three components of model credibility, namely, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise, were tested on the advertising outcome measures. Each component was hypothesized to have an influence on attitudes toward the ad (H8a-c). In particular, the effect of product type along with model's race, model expertise was expected to have a positive influence on Asian American consumers' attitudes toward the ad (H8b). Despite this prediction, model trustworthiness was the only significant indicator of perceived model credibility (H8c). While this finding was initially surprising, considering the characteristics of Asian culture using Hofstede's (1997) cultural dimensions, the finding certainly makes sense to a greater extent.

Among Hofstede's (1997) four cultural dimensions, the concept of uncertainty avoidance explains the best about the salience of model trustworthiness among Asian American respondents in this study. In general, Asian culture is considered to score high on uncertainty avoidance, and individuals from this type of culture tend to have a lower tolerance level for ambiguity (de Mooij 1998). In this study, the relationship between perceived model similarity and credibility was found to be significant. Therefore, it is possible to argue that Asian Americans tend to find Asian models in ads more trustworthy than Caucasian models because of the perceived similarity and their tendency of high uncertainty avoidance. As a result, they tended to rate ads with Asian models more favorable than ads with Caucasian models. Combining with the effect of model congruency and induced model trustworthiness, the use of Asian models (endorsers) may have resulted in a higher favorability of advertising campaigns associated with the endorsers for Asian American consumers. The results from the current study suggest that perceived similarity and model (source) trustworthiness are the two most important considerations for the assessment of Asian American advertising evaluation process. In this regard, it is believed that the current study has made a significant contribution for making the first step to clarify the mechanism of Asian American consumers' advertising responses.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION

For effective communication to consumers, it is essential to recognize the importance of source credibility in advertising. In this regard, the area of research on endorsers' credibility is likely to remain popular both in the industry and academia. While many studies have explored this area, it appears that cultural antecedents of source credibility deserve more attention as the American society is becoming increasingly multicultural. In this sense, it is believed that the current study has played an important role in adding the cultural dimension to the existing source credibility research. However, there are several issues that need to be addressed as considerations for future research.

Limitations of the Current Study

First, similar to the previous study on Asian American consumers' ethnic identification on advertising evaluations (Morimoto and La Ferle 2005), due to the product selected (skin foundation as the most racially-charged product among all of the products provided in the pretest), the data from only female subjects were used in the current study. To increase generalizability of the findings, it is suggested that future studies explore other racially-charged product categories that are applicable and relevant to both males and females.

As Morimoto and La Ferle (2005) stated, the current study also treated Asian American and Caucasian American consumer groups as homogeneous. Particularly for Asian American consumers, this practice can be considered appropriate for the time being, since the proportion of Asian American population in the U.S. is still small; however as

the U.S. society and the Asian communities become more diverse, it is essential to start treating “Asian Americans” as the heterogeneous group. Each segment that makes up the Asian American group, such as Chinese and Japanese, has different and unique cultures and characteristics, and thus, recognizing this uniqueness is likely to be the key for the most successful advertising campaigns.

Along similar lines, the current study used self-identification as the indicator of respondents’ ethnic background, in addition to the initial selection administrated by the registrar’s office. This step was necessary as the ethnicity classification used by the registrar’s office treated Asian Indians also as Asian Americans, and approximately 10 percent of the responses from the registrar’s office mailing was from Asian Indian females. Interestingly, the results of self-identification in the main survey indicate that these Asian Indians also considered themselves as Asian Americans. As this example suggests, it is recommended to redefine Asian Americans, and in the future, researchers studying this diverse consumer group should also begin paying attention to Asian Indians as a subgroup of Asian Americans.

In terms of data collection, the current study used two methods: a mail survey for female Asian American respondents and a regular on-site survey for female Caucasian Americans. Ideally, the data collection method should be consistent; however, due to the limited budget and time constraints, the data from Caucasian Americans were collected by visiting undergraduate advertising courses. This may have resulted in a smaller variance in the data from Caucasian American participants, leading to some non-significant findings from this group because these participants may share similar

characteristics as they choose to major in the same field. Future studies should avoid such inconsistency in data collection as much as possible.

Suggestions for Future Research

In order to expand the understanding of cultural antecedents of model credibility and its relation with advertising responses, there are some issues related to cultural variables that should be considered carefully. For example, in the current study, the only indicator of congruency effect used in the hypothesis testing was perceived model similarity. While this indicator appeared to be significant in the process of Asian American consumers' advertising responses, future studies should also seek for other congruency indicators, such as "the ability to identify with the model (Whittler and DiMeo 1991)," and familiarity with the model, and should investigate how these indicators serve as the predictors of the model congruency effect. Such an attempt will provide an opportunity to deepen the knowledge of advertising responses and consumer behaviors of Asian American consumers.

Also, it is advised that future studies examine the potential effects of temporary ethnicity-related constructs such as ethnic self-awareness (Forehand et al. 2002) and situational ethnicity (Stayman and Deshpandé 1989) on Asian American consumers' responses to ethnic advertising. Situational ethnicity assumes that one's ethnic identity is likely to be influenced by the immediate environment (Stayman and Deshpandé 1989), and ethnic self-awareness is likely to depend on many other factors including social situations and cultural cues presented in advertisements (Forehand et al. 2002). Although these temporary constructs have been discussed previously, there have not been

well-established measures for them. For example, the open-ended question developed by McGuire et al. (1978) has been used as a measure of ethnic self-awareness. However, this is a single-item measure with an item that asks respondents to freely write about who they are. It is measured by the total numbers of ethnicity-related words is used as the ethnic self-awareness score. Since it is a single item measure, a question about the scale's reliability still remains as a concern. Other scholars have used the scale of ethnic identification as an indicator of ethnic self-awareness. However, conceptually, these temporary constructs have been distinguished from ethnic identification which is often regarded as an enduring construct. As these examples indicate, scholars have been experiencing difficulties to construct a valid and reliable scale for these constructs. For better understanding of the mechanisms of Asian Americans' advertising responses, it is essential to examine the impact of ethnicity with different approaches. To do so, more efforts are necessary to establish reliable scales of these temporary ethnicity-related constructs to better understand the effectiveness of cultural cues including model's race presented in advertisements.

Lastly, as indicated in the previous discussion section, there may be other cultural antecedents of perceived model credibility that explain the process more clearly than the strength of ethnic identification, such as the degree of acculturation and in-group bias. While the replication of the study is certainly preferable and rewarding to learn more about the effect of ethnic identification on perceived model credibility and advertising outcomes of Asian Americans, future studies should also explore other potential cultural antecedents to disclose the mechanism of the influence of cultural

variables on cognitive processing of Asian American consumers. Despite these difficulties and limitations, the current study has certainly made a significant contribution to adding the knowledge on Asian American consumers, and it is hoped that this study will help bring to attention of researchers and practitioners this long-marginalized ethnic consumer group in the future.

Implications

Practical Implications

The findings from the current study clearly showed the significant effect of model congruency through perceived model similarity on perceived model credibility and the advertising responses that followed. From the practical perspective, these results confirm for practitioners that when targeting Asian American consumers, like other ethnic minority consumer groups, model congruency is a very important key for maximizing the effectiveness of advertising campaigns, regardless of the product type advertised in the campaign. Also, the strong relationship between perceived model credibility and advertising responses including purchase intentions should be regarded as the key to the successful practice targeting Asian American consumers. Specifically, among three components of perceived model credibility, trustworthiness appears to be the most influential factor on the advertising outcomes. Based on these findings, it is recommended that when advertising to Asian Americans, marketers should select not only racially-congruent but also endorsers or models that are perceived as trustworthy in their advertising campaigns to appeal to this consumer group.

Academic Implications

From the academic viewpoint, in addition to the finding that confirms the strong influence of model congruency and perceived credibility, this study has raised several important issues that help scholars to advance the knowledge of the cognitive processing of Asian American consumers and their reactions to ads featuring cultural cues. Unlike African Americans, the strength of ethnic identification did not present itself as a significant predictor of perceived model credibility or advertising outcomes for Asian Americans. This finding suggests that compared with other ethnic minority groups, cultural antecedents of model credibility and the resulting advertising evaluation process of Asian Americans may involve different cultural variables other than ethnic identification. As stated earlier, this different should be explored in more detail and may stem from Asian Americans' immigration situation or their perceived status in society. Potential cultural variables that could be further explored include the degree of acculturation and in-group bias. Certainly, more studies are necessary to explore the cognitive processing of Asian American advertising evaluations, and in a sense, it is believed that the current study has contributed to make a path for future research in this area.

Moreover, the current study has revealed that for Asian American consumers, the factor of model trustworthiness was the most significant indicator of perceived model credibility, and the effect of product type in relation to perceived model expertise was not a significant indicator of model credibility. These results suggest that there may be other potential underlying cultural factors that influence perceived model credibility and its

components. Hence, it can be said that this study has provided more food for thought to advance our knowledge about source credibility and ethnic consumers. At the same time, the current study has confirmed previous findings on source credibility in advertising research by replicating the significant relationship between perceived model credibility and advertising evaluations. Therefore, the efforts to discover the underlying mechanism of Asian American consumers' advertising processing made in this study have greatly contributed to the knowledge of cross-cultural advertising and source credibility.

Conclusion

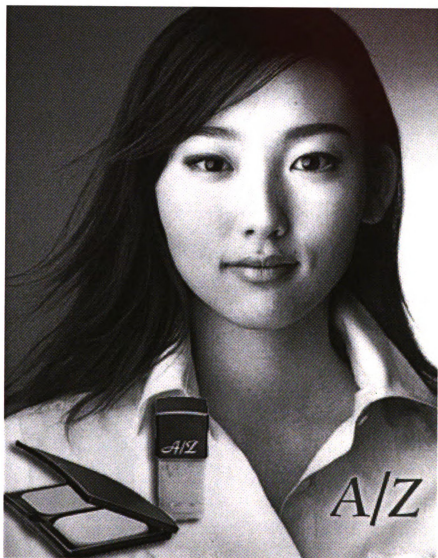
For Asian American consumers, model congruency, perceived model similarity, and trustworthiness seem to be the influential factors on their cognitive processing of advertisements. In particular, as a cultural antecedent of perceived model credibility, perceived model similarity emerged as a distinctive predictor. Several potential explanations to this phenomenon were discussed in the previous chapter, such as Asian Americans' cultural characteristics represented by collectivism and Confucianism that hold high value in group memberships and harmony.

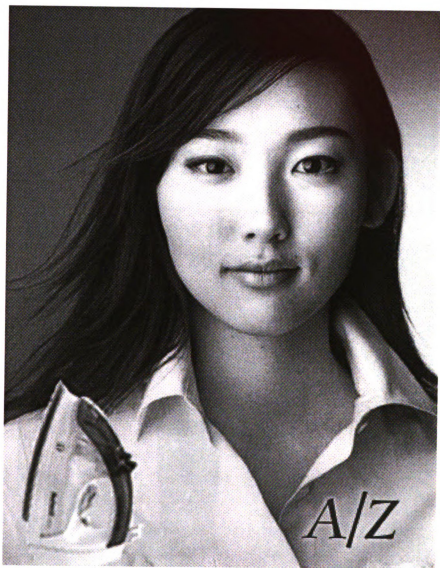
While more research is necessary to determine what aspects of perceived similarity plays a role in the development of perceived model credibility and the process of Asian Americans' advertising evaluations, the results from the current study suggest that in addition to physical appearances such as race, lifestyle may be a key indicator of perceived similarity with models presented in advertisements. Particularly for younger generations who tend to be more accustomed to mainstream American values and lifestyle, perceived similarity beyond racial congruency may be the driving factor of

perceived model credibility and resulting advertising evaluations of Asian Americans. Future studies can certainly examine the use of the same ethnic model in different lifestyle images, and investigate whether it is race of the model or the lifestyle portrayed that is more important for perceived model credibility and advertising evaluations of Asian American consumers.

It appears that the growth in Asian immigrants in the U.S. will continue in this century, and the future of this market is promising for advertisers. Hence, more research in both academia and the industry is essential in order to achieve better marketing communication strategies targeting this ethnic minority group. It is believed that this study has made a notable contribution to bring to light this understudied consumer group, and also, it is hoped that more studies will follow for the advancement of knowledge on Asian Americans and cross-cultural advertising.

APPENDIX
Sample Advertisements









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