



PERGAMON

Tourism Management 23 (2002) 489–498

TOURISM  
MANAGEMENT

www.elsevier.com/locate/tourman

# Is the tour leader an effective endorser for group package tour brochures?

Kuo-Ching Wang<sup>a,\*</sup>, An-Tien Hsieh<sup>b</sup>, Wen-Yu Chen<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department and Graduate School of Tourism Management, Chinese Culture University, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC

<sup>b</sup>College of Business, Chinese Culture University, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC

<sup>c</sup>Graduate Institute of Management Science, Ming-Chuan University, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC

Received 15 July 2001; accepted 4 November 2001

## Abstract

In many Asian countries and areas, such as Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, and China, etc., group package tour is one of the main modes of outbound travel. Several studies have highlighted the important role played by tour leaders in group package tours; they are considered to be indispensable by the tourists themselves and their presentation can make or break a tour. Previous studies have mainly used celebrities, experts, CEOs, and consumers as endorsers for advertising. However, few empirical studies have examined how the advertising effectiveness would be changed if tour leader is used as endorsers for group package tour brochures.

This study adopts an epistemological perspective towards extending the limited research on the impact of tour leaders used in advertising as endorsers. A rigorous experimental design was employed; nine experimental groups were included, in total, 844 student subjects participated in the study. The results showed that tour leaders as endorsers for group package tour brochures had a more positive advertising effectiveness than the traditional brochure design and CEO as an endorser elicited higher purchase intention than tour leader as endorser. Implications for managers and scholars are discussed and suggestions for the direction of future study and practice are also provided. © 2002 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Endorser advertising; Group package tour; Tour leader; Travel brochure

## 1. Introduction

The significance of tour leaders and travel brochures has often been indicated in prior literature. In many Asian countries and areas, such as Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, China, etc., the group package tour (hereafter abbreviated GPT) is one of the main modes of outbound travel (Wang, Hsieh, & Huan, 2000; Prideaux, 1998; Tourism Bureau, 2000; Wang & Sheldon, 1995; Nozawa, 1992; Yamamoto & Gill, 1999). The most distinctive feature of the GPT is the tour leader. Quiroga (1990) and Schmidt (1979) have pointed out that the function of the tour guide within the group is considered to be indispensable by the tourists themselves, and the quality of the tour guide is a crucial variable; his or her presentation can make or break a tour. Studies by

Mossberg (1995) and Agrusa (1994) also concluded that the tour leader is important to a tourist's perception of the tour and a professional tour guide is a first-choice amenity for group tours. Furthermore, Holloway's (1981) one day coach-tours study, Cohen (1985), and Schuchat (1983), all indicated that the tour guide's various important roles and responsibilities include: provision of security and protection, information, promotion of group interaction, surrogate parent, pathfinder and mentor, leader and mediator, and entertainer.

With regard to the importance of the travel brochure, Yamamoto and Gill (1999) have noted that the most important source of information for tourists planning overseas package tours is the tour brochure. In addition, Holloway and Plant (1988) have demonstrated that among the array of promotional methods available, the travel brochure is one of the most important and widely utilized. Coltman (1989) has also indicated that potential customers will compare the brochure of one destination or supplier with the brochure of its

\*Corresponding author. Tel.: +886-2-2765-5413.

E-mail address: wangkc@faculty.pccu.edu.tw, wangkc@seed.net.tw (K.-C. Wang).

competitors, and it is likely that the one with the best brochure will receive the business. In Gladwell and Wolff's (1989) research, the travel brochure was assessed by travel writers as more important than videotape, photographs, audio cassettes, etc. Furthermore, although tourists were often critical of the brochures, they did rely on them in making holiday choices (McCullough, 1977). Potential tourists are bound to read and be influenced by travel brochures (Moeran, 1983). Wicks and Schuett (1991) also found that the brochure is an attractive information source for many vacation decision makers.

In brief, the aforementioned studies have clearly established that the tour leader and the travel brochure are two important variables in the relationship between tourists and travel operators. However, to the knowledge of the authors no research with which we are familiar has systematically tested the advertising effectiveness of featuring the tour leader in the GPT brochure. Does the tourist have a more favorable attitude toward the GPT brochure if it includes the tour leader's photo and a brief personal resume? What effect does this feature of travel brochure design have on GPT tourists' purchasing intentions?

From the perspective of advertising theory, we can regard the tour leader as an endorser. If so, this connects our analysis of the leader's role to the existing literature on the effectiveness of endorsement-driven advertising. Whether or not this connection proves relevant and fruitful is an issue to be examined in the following sections.

## 2. Research problem

Early endorsement studies have shown that the effectiveness of endorsers varies according to the nature of the product (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Using the company president as an endorser helped to increase subjects' rating of the commercial (Rubin, Mager, and Friedman, 1982). The endorser type was a significant source of variation across a set of 16 advertising related criterion variables (Freiden, 1984). Recent studies highlight the advertising effectiveness of: the celebrity as an endorser (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1995); multiple product endorsements (Tripp, Jensen, & Carlson, 1994); corporate and endorser credibility (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999); and the distinction between the endorser's physical attractiveness and expertise (Till & Busler, 1998).

Although these early and recent endorsement studies provided useful information, they did not examine the specific issues addressed in our research.

First, consider substitution and tourists' expectations, Middleton (1995) has indicated that the brochure performs a "product substitute" role and it establishes

expectations of quality, value for money, product image and status. In a similar vein, the importance of the tour leader has been confirmed (Wang et al., 2000; Quiroga, 1990; Schmidt, 1979). Accordingly, from the tourist's point of view, it may imply that if the tour brochure contains information about the tour leader, the tourist will have a more complete and tangible expectation with regard to the tour brochure. Since the endorsers used in prior advertising research are typically company presidents, CEOs, celebrities, experts, and typical consumers, in essence, they are not bonded with the tour. Therefore, they cannot generate the above-mentioned expectation to the same extent as the tour leaders are able to do on the tour brochure.

Secondly, consider the issue of informational searching. Hass, Petty, Ostrom, and Brock (1981) have demonstrated that the persuasiveness of advertising source mainly comes from the source's characteristics, namely, the spokesman's characteristics. Ohanian (1990) once indicated that the communicator's character has a significant effect on persuasiveness of the message. However, in Lafferty and Goldsmith's (1999) recent study of corporations' and endorsers' credibility, the two authors indicated that under conditions of high involvement, the product's attributes are more important to the purchase decision than those of the endorser.

Apparently, from the above discussion the characteristics of either the endorser or the attributes of the product have an important effect on the customer's information searching. Based on studies by Clarke and Belk (1979) and Capella and Greco's (1987) information sources used by elderly vacationers, it may be inferred that a GPT is a high involvement product, and tourists are likely to spend more time engaging in an external search for information. Besides, Wang et al. (2000) also argued that the role played by the GPT leader is an important part of the tour.

According to the above reasoning, if we incorporate the tour leader as an endorser, then, from the perspective of a tourist who is seeking information, the GPT leader's advertising effectiveness should be different from the company president, CEO, celebrity, expert, and typical consumer.

Thirdly, consider attribution theory. People tend to make internal attributions for positive outcomes but external attributions for negative outcomes (Folkes, 1988, Bitner, Booms, & Mohr, 1994). In view of that, some researchers have indicated that if an advertising endorser apparently stands to advance his/her own economic interests on the basis of the endorsement, what he/she advocates is less effective (Folkes, 1988; Mowen & Brown, 1980; Rubin et al., 1982; Tripp et al., 1994). As a rule, in GPTs, the group size will directly influence the personal income of the tour leader through the amount of tips, commissions which from the shopping and optional tours, etc. (Wang et al., 2000).

Accordingly, in observing the tour leader as endorser, the tourist may possibly attribute the tour leader's advocacy of his own tour to a monetary incentive rather than to a sincere belief in the GPT, thereby making the advertising less effective.

In summary, the preceding rationale indicates that the tour leader plays an important role in the GPT (Quiroga, 1990; Schmidt, 1979), as part of the tour (Wang et al., 2000). Moreover, Mowen and Brown (1980) also noted that if a strong unit relationship exists between the endorser and the product, advertising effectiveness will be at a maximum. Thus, incorporating the tour leader as an endorser for the GPT in the brochure can enhance advertising effectiveness and stimulate consumers' purchase intentions. However, from the attribution theory perspective, such endorsements are less effective (Mowen & Brown, 1980; Rubin et al. 1982; Tripp et al., 1994).

Though the GPT and endorsement related research has considered different cultural milieus, prior empirical evidence concerning how tourists react to the tour leader as an endorser in the GPT brochure is scant, leaving unresolved and conflicting issues in an important research arena. Additionally, the tour leader as an endorser is quite different from traditional types of endorser, such as president, CEO, celebrity, expert, and typical consumer. Does the tour leader as endorser have any different effect on tourist attitudes and purchase intentions compared with other endorsers? Is the tour leader an effective endorser for a GPT brochure?

The present study will discuss these questions, proposes specific hypotheses, and uses an experiment to assess the impact of the tour leader and the brochure on tourist purchase intentions and attitudes toward the brand and the ad itself. Finally, implications for managers and scholars are discussed and suggestions are offered for the direction of future study and practice.

### 3. Research concepts and hypotheses

Uzzell (1984) recognized that holiday brochures include two mediums for the communication of myth: (1) the photographic image; and (2) the printed word. Liu (1986) further emphasized that people process pictures differently from words and that pictures are represented in memory by differing forms of cognitive structure. Pictures are more memorable than words (Leong, Ang, & Tham, 1996), since pictures can evoke mental images (Childers & Houston, 1984; Unnava & Burnkrant, 1991). This distinction has been reviewed and examined in previous advertising effectiveness research (Leong et al. (1996); Laskey, Seaton, & Nicholls, 1994).

The aforementioned discussions imply that a GPT brochure containing an endorsement by the tour leader

should have a positive effect on customer attitudes and purchase intentions. Thus, it is hypothesized:

- H<sub>1a</sub>: Subjects will have a more positive attitude-towards-the-ad for a GPT brochure that features the tour leader's photo than towards a brochure with no such stimulus.
- H<sub>1b</sub>: Subjects will have a more positive attitude-towards-the-brand for a GPT brochure that features the tour leader's photo than towards a brochure with no such stimulus.
- H<sub>1c</sub>: Subjects will have greater purchase intentions for a GPT brochure that features the tour leader's photo than for a brochure with no such stimulus.

Leong et al. (1996) once concluded that better recall was obtained with ads containing pictures and words than with words-only ads. Abernethy and Butler (1993) also indicated that service firms with standard employee training programs could incorporate training information in their advertising. This information could then be incorporated into the firm's advertising as tangible evidence of service quality. Duke and Persia (1993) also noted that travelers expect the tour to be the best method of seeing as much as possible in a congenial atmosphere, with comfort, scenery, and experienced tour guides.

Accordingly, if a GPT brochure not only features the tour leader's photo but also contains his/her brief personal resume (background, tour leading experience...etc.), it will be more influential than a brochure with only the tour leader's photo, hence:

- H<sub>2a</sub>: Subjects will have a more positive attitude-towards-the-ad for a GPT brochure that features the tour leader's photo and brief personal resume than towards a brochure with no such stimulus.
- H<sub>2b</sub>: Subjects will have a more positive attitude-towards-the-brand for a GPT brochure that features the tour leader's photo and brief personal resume than towards a brochure with no such stimulus.
- H<sub>2c</sub>: Subjects will have greater purchase intentions for a GPT brochure that features the tour leader's photo and brief personal resume than for a brochure with no such stimulus.

The impact of repetition on recall is well documented (Singh, Rothschild, & Churchill, 1988). Many studies in verbal learning have demonstrated a positive relationship between exposure frequency and message memory (Crowder, 1976). Repetition enhances recall by strengthening memory traces; it increases redundancy and provides more opportunities for processing the message (Pechmann & Stewart, 1988). A study by Hawkins and Hoch (1992), also indicated that simple repetition of a

message can be an effective means of changing consumers' beliefs about products.

Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that more advertising exposure and repetition will increase the influence of the brochure on potential customers. Therefore, it is posited that:

- H<sub>3a</sub>: Subjects will have a more positive attitude-towards-the-ad for a GPT brochure that features the tour leader's photo and repeats once than towards a brochure with no such stimulus.
- H<sub>3b</sub>: Subjects will have a more positive attitude-towards-the-brand for a GPT brochure that features the tour leader's photo and repeats once than towards a brochure with no such stimulus.
- H<sub>3c</sub>: Subjects will have greater purchase intentions for a GPT brochure that features the tour leader's photo and repeats once than for a brochure with no such stimulus.

The advertising effectiveness of a CEO as endorser has been examined (Freiden, 1984). According to cognitive response theory, an expert source such as a CEO will be persuasive because consumers limit their negative thoughts when exposed to such a source (Stephens & Faranda, 1993). Moreover, based on the rationale of the tourists' expectations (Middleton, 1995) and informational searching (Hass et al., 1981; Ohanian, 1990), this current research postulates that the advertising effectiveness of a tour leader will be different from that of a CEO.

In practice, a number of CEOs in travel agencies also play the role of tour leader. Therefore, the possible advertising effectiveness of CEO as an endorser in a travel brochure is quite complex, confounded, and still unclear. However, in Rubin et al.'s (1982) study they concluded that using the company president (versus professional spokesperson) as an endorser could help improve subjects' ratings of a commercial. It seems advisable for companies to consider using their own CEO as an endorser rather than an anonymous spokesperson.

According to the above reasoning, it is plausible to assume that a CEO as an endorser in a travel brochure will involve two diverse roles (CEO and expert) which is different from the tour leader (expert) as an endorser. Accordingly:

- H<sub>4a</sub>: Subjects will have a more positive attitude-towards-the-ad, attitude-towards-the-brand, and greater purchase intentions for a GPT brochure that features a CEO's photo than to a brochure with a tour leader's photo.
- H<sub>4b</sub>: Subjects will have a more positive attitude-towards-the-ad, attitude-towards-the-brand, and greater purchase intentions for a GPT brochure

that features a CEO's photo and brief personal resume than to a brochure with a tour leader's photo and brief personal resume.

- H<sub>4c</sub>: Subjects will have a more positive attitude-towards-the-ad, attitude-towards-the-brand, and greater purchase intentions for a GPT brochure that features a CEO's photo and repeats once than to a brochure with a tour leader's photo and repeats once.

#### 4. Research design

The experimental design is employed and as the previous studies indicated this approach to assessing advertising effectiveness are needed (Woodside, 1990; Laskey et al., 1994). The entire research design includes the following three stages.

##### 4.1. First stage-selecting the tour leader

Prior research indicated that physically attractive models or communicators might produce higher ad ratings than unattractive models (Baker & Churchill, 1977; Joseph, 1982). Taking this factor into consideration so as to avoid likely biases, a rigorous procedure for selecting the tour leader's photo was conducted. According to their physical attractiveness, nine tour leaders' photos (Fig. 1) were initially ranked by 100 randomly selected non-business undergraduate students. The ranking scale was 1–9 points and mean scores were computed for each of the 9 photos. The photo with the fifth highest mean was finally selected as the stimulus for the brochure design. Besides, in order to test interjudge reliability, Kendall coefficient of concordance ( $W$ ) was computed. The result seems sound; the  $W$  of 0.462,  $p < 0.001$ .

##### 4.2. Second stage-subjects and procedures

This stage was divided into two parts. In the first, student subjects were selected for the experiment. Students are considered appropriate for experimental



Fig. 1. The selection of tour leader.

research because of their homogeneity (Mowen & Brown, 1980). In Singh, Lessig, Kim, Gupta, and Hocutt's (2000) study of the advertising effectiveness of pictures, it was shown that with respect to effectiveness, students and community volunteers are the same. A study by Laskey et al. (1994) also noted that students evince significant interest in the travel experience, their use is appropriate for experimental control and external validity. Therefore, with the assistances of the College of Business Faculties, five departments participated in this current experiment. The Department of Tourism Management was deliberately excluded so as to avoid the possibility of judgments by experts (Freiden, 1984). Within each department a total of 18 classes were randomly assigned to one of nine groups (two classes per group). Furthermore, in order to reduce demand characteristics (Zikmund, 1994) and rationalize the subjects (Till & Shimp, 1998), during the experiments, the researchers informed the subjects that a major wholesale travel agency was interested in their opinions about an advertising campaign for a new itinerary. The second part of the second stage involved the development of stimulus materials and the creation of a brochure.

Initially, the researchers collected five different wholesale travel agencies' "American West Coast 9-day tour" brochures. This destination was chosen because the United States is among the top five destination countries for Taiwanese outbound travelers (Tourism Bureau, 2000). After extensive discussion, one travel agency's brochure was selected as the model brochure. Subsequently, the researchers contacted this travel agency and requested the authorization to redesign and duplicate its American West Coast 9-day tour brochure.

Finally, a fictitious brand name was developed for the purpose of avoiding potential confounding effects from preexisting brand attitudes (Woodside, 1990; Till & Shimp, 1998; Stafford, 1998), and a professional graphic designer was also asked to help redesign the company's logo and layout of the brochure. Nine different color print brochures were created; in total, 1080 copies. The copies were virtually the same, the only differences being the photo (tour leader's/CEO's/no), a brief personal resume (yes/no), and repetition (yes/no). The entire experimental groups are presented in Table 1. (Copies of the experimental brochures are available from the first author.)

#### 4.3. *Third stage-dependent variables and covariates*

This stage was designed in five parts. In the first part, to assess attitude toward the brand, the student subjects were asked to rate on three 7-point bipolar adjective scales. The scales were anchored with "good/bad", "favorable/unfavorable", and "satisfactory/unsatisfac-

Table 1  
The experimental groups

Group	Dimension		
	Endorser's photo	Personal resume	Repetition
Control group	No	No	No
Experimental group 1	Tour leader	No	Once
Experimental group 2	Tour leader	Yes	Once
Experimental group 3	Tour leader	No	Twice
Experimental group 4	Tour leader	Yes	Twice
Experimental group 5	CEO	No	Once
Experimental group 6	CEO	Yes	Once
Experimental group 7	CEO	No	Twice
Experimental group 8	CEO	Yes	Twice

tory" (Bruner & Hensel, 1992; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999).

In the second part, three items were ranked on a 7-point bipolar scale anchored by "good/bad", "favorable/unfavorable", and "pleasant/unpleasant" to measure attitude toward the ad (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999). In the third part, purchase intentions were measured by a three-item 7-point bipolar scale anchored by "very likely/very unlikely", "probable/improbable", and "possible/impossible" (Yi, 1990; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999).

In the fourth part, a previous study had indicated that social desirability and acquiescence biases can occur when subjects respond to a questionnaire, threatening the reliability and validity of the other measures (Bagozzi, 1994). Therefore, five items from the Marlowe–Crowne social desirability scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964; Paulhus, 1984), five items from the self-deception scale (Paulhus, 1984), and five items from the YN-2 scale (Goldsmith, 1987; Wells, 1961) were included in the questionnaire to assess the likely social desirability and yea-saying biases (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999).

The final part consisted of seven questions included to capture the subjects' demographic profiles, an open-ended question to assess hypothesis guessing was also asked, and the subjects' overseas traveling experiences and the modes of travel used were asked. The purpose of these last two questions was to determine if the dependent and independent variables would be moderated by the subjects' traveling experiences and modes (Dholakia & Sternthal, 1977). Lastly, the subjects were asked if they had seen the brochure and endorser before. This question was asked in order to minimize preexisting knowledge and any affect due to prior exposure and familiarity (Till & Shimp, 1998). If they did, it could bias their responses and invalidate the results. Therefore, those subjects were not considered and analyzed further.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Reliability and validity test

Before the large-scale experiment took place, this study used a small-scale pre-test (40 samples) in order to uncover any potential problems. Based on the respondents' results and comments, some revisions were made to improve the clarity of the questionnaire items. The reliability of the measurement scale was tested and Cronbach  $\alpha$  was employed. Attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand and purchase intentions were tested. The results seemed sound, all the Cronbach  $\alpha$  were at least above 0.75. With respect to the test of social desirability, self-deception, and YN-2, the results indicated that none of the potential biases existed; thus, these items were not considered further.

### 5.2. Subjects and characteristics

Among the nine groups 1004 questionnaires were collected. In total, 844 questionnaires were useable. Of the 844 subjects, 107 were in the control group, 84 were in experimental group 1, 86 were in experimental group 2, 93 were in experimental group 3, 92 were in experimental group 4, 92 were in experimental group 5, 93 were in experimental group 6, 109 were in experimental group 7, and 88 were in experimental group 8.

The characteristics of the 844 participants were as follows: 55.1% were female and 44.9% were male. About 28.2% were 20 years old and 20.0% were 19 years of age; 47% subjects were from the Department of International Trade, 19.2% were from the Department of Business Administration. Nearly 45% of subjects had at least one experience of overseas travel. For their first trip, most of them were by GPT (63.9), 36.1% were by foreign independent tour (FIT).

### 5.3. Attitudes and purchase intentions

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was run to test whether there were significant differences in response to various GPT brochure designs. Attitude

toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intentions represented the dependent variables, and the different groups as independent variables. As shown in Table 2, no significance was found in either attitude toward the ad or attitude toward the brand. However, a statistical difference was found in the purchase intentions variable ( $F = 9.886, p < 0.01$ ), and the mean score also indicated that experimental groups 2 (3.81), 3 (4.00), and 4 (4.00) were significantly higher than the control group (3.05).

In brief, as the preceding results and Table 2 show, the advertising effectiveness that was increased by featuring the tour leader's photo in the travel brochure was limited. Therefore, hypotheses  $H_{1a}$ ,  $H_{1b}$ , and  $H_{1c}$  were not supported. However, featuring the tour leader's photo with his personal resume in the travel brochure increased consumer's purchase intentions. But this effectiveness was not found in attitude toward the ad or attitude toward the brand. Hence, hypotheses  $H_{2a}$  and  $H_{2b}$  were not supported, but hypothesis  $H_{2c}$  was supported. Finally, in a similar vein, group 3 results indicated that subjects had greater purchase intentions from a GPT brochure with the tour leader's photo featured in it and repeated once than the control group. Hence hypotheses  $H_{3a}$  and  $H_{3b}$  were not supported, but hypothesis  $H_{3c}$  was supported.

One interesting result was found in group 4 where the experimental brochure featured the tour leader's photo twice with his brief personal resume (the largest stimuli design). According to the mean score of Table 2, for purchase intentions group 4 had the same mean as group 3 and among the five groups, group 4 had the lowest mean in attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand, though not significantly different.

An independent-samples  $t$  test was used for examining the advertising effectiveness between the tour leader and a CEO as endorser in eight experimental groups. As reported in Table 3, the two specific endorsers employed in this research elicited very similar responses even though they represented distinctly different executions. The  $t$  test results indicated that only two pairs of the experimental groups were found to differ significantly. Groups 1 and 5 differed in purchase intentions  $p < 0.01$ ,

Table 2  
The advertising effectiveness between control and experimental groups<sup>a</sup>

Advertising effective	Control group	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	$F$	Wilks' Lambda
Attitude toward the ad	4.47	4.56	4.49	4.43	4.39	0.469	0.865*
Attitude toward the brand	4.44	4.40	4.31	4.65	4.29	1.994	
Purchase intentions	3.05 <sup>a</sup>	3.46	3.81 <sup>b</sup>	4.00 <sup>b</sup>	4.00 <sup>b</sup>	9.886*	

<sup>a</sup> Means with similar superscripts are not significantly different based on Scheffe tests  $p$  significant at 0.01 level. If no superscripts appear, none of the means was significantly different.

\*Represents statistically significant at 0.01 level.

Table 3  
Advertising effectiveness among the experimental groups

	The mean of advertising effectiveness		
	Tour leader	CEO	<i>t</i>
Photo	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 5</i>	
ATTA <sup>a</sup>	4.56 (0.93)	4.55 (1.00)	0.112
ATTB	4.40 (0.98)	4.49 (0.90)	−0.598
PI	3.46 (1.34)	3.99 (1.36)	−2.598**
Photo and brief personal resume	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 6</i>	
ATTA	4.49 (0.81)	4.58 (1.15)	−0.589
ATTB	4.31 (0.89)	4.45 (0.96)	−0.992
PI	3.81 (1.18)	3.84 (1.42)	−0.146
Photo repeat once	<i>Group 3</i>	<i>Group 7</i>	
ATTA	4.43 (0.84)	4.40 (0.80)	0.197
ATTB	4.65 (0.98)	4.36 (0.87)	2.153*
PI	4.00 (1.31)	3.75 (1.31)	1.360
Photo repeat once and brief personal resume	<i>Group 4</i>	<i>Group 8</i>	
ATTA	4.39 (0.76)	4.40 (0.84)	−0.023
ATTB	4.29 (0.81)	4.38 (0.81)	−0.798
PI	4.00 (1.19)	3.77 (1.13)	1.335

<sup>a</sup> ATTA (attitude toward the ad); ATTB (attitude toward the brand); PI (purchase intentions). Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

\*Represents *t* significant at 0.05 level; \*\* represents *t* significant at 0.01 level.

revealing that featuring the photo of CEO as an endorser in a GPT brochure can induce higher purchase intentions than the tour leader.

The other significantly different pairing was that of groups 3 and 7 in attitude toward the brand  $p < 0.05$ , in contrast to the expected direction, tour leader as endorser with photo and repeated once had a more positive effect on attitude toward the brand. These above findings lent partial support for H<sub>4a</sub>, but not for H<sub>4b</sub> and H<sub>4c</sub>.

## 6. Conclusion and discussion

The propensity of travelers to choose a GPT is somehow dependent on travel risks or financial considerations (Sheldon & Mak, 1987; Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992; Tsaur, Tzeng, & Wang, 1997). The general marketing service literature has also indicated that more search for decision-making information occurs when risk rises (Murray, 1991), and the provision of information leads to attitudinal and behavioral change (Uzzell, 1984). The results of this present study revealed that featuring the photo and personal resume of the tour leader in the GPT brochure had a more positive effect than traditional brochure design with these features omitted. This finding may imply that the experimental brochure designs provide important travel related information and that information causes the subjects

to change their attitude and behavior toward the GPT brochure.

This result may also reflect that a GPT is essentially an intangible product and the tour leader is a crucial variable of it (Quiroga, 1990; Schmidt, 1979). Customers cannot “inspect” the product until the day the GPT commences. Therefore, an innovative GPT brochure design with more information about the tour leader may reduce the customers’ risk perception and this risk reduction finally leads to changes in attitude and behavior toward the advertising. However, how much information is needed seems to remain unclear as revealed in Table 2. When more information was provided (group 4) no differences were found. This phenomenon may suggest an avenue for continued research.

CEO as an endorser would have more advertising effectiveness than the tour leader was the hypothesis of the present research; the results were to some extent unexpected. As presented in Table 3, using the CEO as the endorser elicited higher purchase intentions than using the tour leader. This is possibly because the CEO was perceived by the subjects to be both an expert and trustworthy. The effect of such credibility has been pointed out in prior studies of the CEO or company president as the endorser (Stephens & Faranda, 1993; Rubin et al., 1982). Such credibility could generate the most opinion change (McGinnies & Ward, 1980; Friedman & Friedman, 1979).

More specifically, from Heung and Chu’s (2000) study travel agency reputation was rated by Hong Kong

consumers first among 29 travel agency selection attributes. It is reasonable to infer that from the customers' perspective, the CEO might be viewed as the travel agency; his role and characteristics represent the guarantee of service quality. Therefore, using the CEO as an endorser elicited higher purchase intentions than tour leader. However, more research is necessary before drawing any firm conclusions about this inference. Future research may take both the CEO and tour leader's perceived attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise into consideration (Ohanian, 1990), to further examine advertising effectiveness.

Results of this study have several practical implications. In many Asian countries and areas such as Taiwan, Japan, China, Korea, and Hong Kong, where competition for the outbound travel market is fierce (Wang et al., 2000; Heung & Chu, 2000). Tours often operate on low margins and one of the largest areas of expenditure is the brochure, many hundreds and thousands of which are printed and distributed. Very few tour operators appear to devote the enough attention to the brochures' design (Hodgson, 1991). In light of the GPT brochure design result, including the tour leader as endorser on GPT brochure not only has a more positive advertising effect but also is a way for tour operators' to convey the messages that: (1) the company is trying to provide more information, and (2) the company has confidence in its employees. Kendall and Booms (1989) once noted that many statements from the focus groups suggested that respondents feel if you have seen one travel agency, you have seen them all. Furthermore, Abernethy and Butler (1993) also noted that firms using advertising to convince potential consumers that a firm's personnel are superior may also reap a competitive advantage since contact people are a key component of service quality. In short, an innovative GPT brochure design with inclusion of the tour leader is definitely not a strategy. But it could play an important part and undoubtedly differentiate the brochure from that of the competitors' as potential tourists plan their GPTs.

Although using the tour leader as endorser has a positive effect on advertising and also entails numerous important practical implications, the tour company may still confront difficulties when this creative idea is actually carried out.

Typically, there is an interval of time between the day the brochure is published and the commencement of a GPT. Thus, if the endorser for the brochure turns out not to be the actual tour leader, a dispute between the consumer and the tour operator could possibly occur. Because the tour operator cannot change the endorser after the brochure is finally published, it seems that "tour leader as endorser" approach lacks an important dimension of flexibility, and such inflexibility might

make this idea nothing but a fantasy. The inflexibility problem may be difficult, but it is possible to find a way to solve it.

Several options may diminish the extent of the problem. First, use company employees as tour leaders instead of free lancers. Usually, free lancers will lead GPTs for several different tour operators, they are more changeable and unmanageable. In Taiwan, many travel agencies frequently use free lancers, approximately 40–55%, to lead their overseas GPTs. Though, the above idea would definitely add some extra costs to tour operation. But, the authors believe it is a trade-off between quality and costs of a GPT. Marketing managers may conduct a pilot-study on certain routes of GPTs, to further examine the genuine cost and effectiveness of this idea.

Second, each GPT brochure could insert two tour leaders as endorsers. They could lead the same itinerary with different GPT commencement days and under certain circumstances (critical illness, death...etc.), the tour operator could retain the right to interchange these two tour leaders. Third, as many companies and educational institutions are now using the Web as a means to distribute information on products and services to potential customers and clients (Arlitt, 1996), the GPT brochure for Internet marketing would be more flexible and economical.

Some ideas for future study are suggested by the limitations of the current research. First, students were used as subjects for this study, although several studies have stated that students are appropriate for experimental research and they are just the same as community volunteers (Mowen & Brown, 1980; Singh et al., 2000). However, the subjects that were used of previous experimental research were mainly university students in the western world. Is it possible that the fundamental attributes of the students that we used in this present study are different from western students, as a result of cultural differences, educational system (e.g., entrance examinations), and compulsory military service? Whether these factors actually influence students' perceptions with regard to travel and travel advertising so as to make them distinct from the general population remains unknown. Future research could take this view into consideration.

Second, customers typically collect a number of different tour operators' GPT brochures for comparator and selection. Besides, Biehal and Chakravarti (1982) once indicated that a reader interested in buying the product in the near future may pay more attention to advertising and process the advertisement at a deeper, more semantic level by comparing and contrasting the features of competing brands. Therefore, future study could take these two factors into consideration: the timing of the interest of buyer and the behavior of comparing the different GPT brochures.



In conclusion, this study has provided useful marketing information for those interested in the GPT. As Wang and Sheldon (1995) has pointed out, China represents the largest population in the world and is currently experiencing stunning growth in outbound travel as travelers are now discovering the rest of the world. Taiwan and China are similar in race, culture, and language; and it is reasonable to believe that China will become the largest outbound GPT export country in the world (Wang et al., 2000). Certainly, it is worthwhile for destination countries to pay closer attention to this situation and the findings and ideas of this rigorous study could be generalized to this travel market. Finally, an understanding of the relationship between the GPT brochure and a tour leader as endorser helps to advance the distinct body of theory and operational knowledge that is accumulating about the travel business. However, empirical study is still needed to increase our knowledge for GPT so as to extend the epistemology of outbound travel.

### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments. Besides, useful suggestions on an earlier draft of this paper were offered by Professor Peter Morton (English Department, Chinese Culture University) and Kimberly Morgan, their assistances are gratefully acknowledged. Special thanks is acknowledged to Barbara Lafferty (Marketing Department, Florida State University) for the questionnaire of her excellent article on corporate and endorser credibility that was published in the *Journal of Business Research*.

### References

- Abernethy, A. M., & Butler, D. D. (1993). Promoting customer contact people. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 7(1), 4–12.
- Agrawal, J., & Kamakura, W. A. (1995). The economic worth of celebrity endorsers: An event study analysis. *Journal of Marketing*, 59(3), 56–62.
- Agrusa, J. (1994). Group tours in Hawaii. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 21(1), 146–147.
- Arlitt, M. F. (1996). An evaluation: Exploring web server performance. *Capacity Management Review*, 24(10), 15–22.
- Bagozzi, R. P. (1994). Measurement in marketing research: Basic principles of questionnaire design. In R. P. Bagozzi (Ed.), *Principles of marketing research* (pp. 1–49). Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.
- Baker, M. J., & Churchill Jr., G. A. (1977). The impact of physically attractive models on advertising evaluations. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 14(4), 538–555.
- Biehal, G., & Chakravarti, D. (1982). Information-presentation format and learning goals as determinants of consumers' memory retrieval and choice processes. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 8(4), 431–441.
- Bitner, M. J., Booms, B. H., & Mohr, L. A. (1994). Critical service encounters: The employee's viewpoint. *Journal of Marketing*, 58(4), 95–106.
- Bruner II, G. C., & Hensel, P. J. (1992). *Marketing scales handbook: A compilation of multi-item measures*. Chicago: American Marketing Association.
- Capella, L. M., & Greco, A. J. (1987). Information sources of elderly for vacation decisions. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 14(1), 148–151.
- Childers, T. L., & Houston, M. J. (1984). Conditions for a picture-superiority effect on consumer memory. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 11(2), 643–654.
- Clarke, K., & Belk, R. W. (1979). The effects of product involvement and task definition on anticipated consumer effort. In W. L. Wilkie (Ed.), *Advances in consumer research*, Vol. 6. (pp. 313–318). Ann Arbor: Association for Consumer Research.
- Cohen, E. (1985). The tourist guide the origins, structure and dynamics of a role. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 12(1), 5–29.
- Coltman, M. M. (1989). *Tourism marketing*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Crowder, R. G. (1976). *Principles of learning and memory*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associate.
- Crowne, D. P., & Marlowe, D. (1964). *The approval motive*. New York: Wiley.
- Dholakia, R., & Sternthal, B. (1977). Highly credible sources: Persuasive facilitators or persuasive liabilities? *Journal of Consumer Research*, 3(4), 223–232.
- Duke, C. R., & Persia, M. A. (1993). Effects of distribution channel level on tour purchasing attributes and information sources. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 2(2/3), 37–55.
- Folkes, V. S. (1988). Recent attribution research in consumer behavior: A review and new directions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14(4), 548–565.
- Freiden, J. B. (1984). Advertising spokesperson effects: an examination of endorser type and gender on two audiences. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 24(5), 33–41.
- Friedman, H. H., & Friedman, L. (1979). Endorser effectiveness by product type. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 19(5), 63–71.
- Gladwell, N. J., & Wolff, R. M. (1989). An assessment of the effectiveness of press kits as a tourism promotion tool. *Journal of Travel Research*, 27(4), 49–51.
- Goldsmith, R. E. (1987). Two studies of yeasaying. *Psychological Reports*, 60(1), 239–244.
- Hass, R. G., Petty, R., Ostrom, T., & Brock, T. (1981). *Effects of source characteristics on cognitive responses and persuasion*. New Jersey: Erlbaum.
- Hawkins, S. A., & Hoch, S. J. (1992). Low-involvement learning: Memory without evaluation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19(2), 212–225.
- Heung, V. C. S., & Chu, R. (2000). Important factors affecting Hong Kong consumers' choice of a travel agency for all-inclusive package tours. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(1), 52–59.
- Hodgson, P. (1991). Qualitative research and tour brochure design. *Journal of the Market Research Society*, 33(1), 51–55.
- Holloway, J. C. (1981). The guided tour: a sociological approach. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 8(3), 377–402.
- Holloway, J. C., & Plant, R. V. (1988). *Marketing for tourism*. London: Pitman.
- Joseph, W. B. (1982). The credibility of physically attractive communicators: A review. *Journal of Advertising*, 11(3), 15–24.
- Kendall, K. W., & Booms, B. H. (1989). Consumer perceptions of travel agencies: communications, images, needs, and expectations. *Journal of Travel Research*, 29(4), 29–37.
- Lafferty, B. A., & Goldsmith, R. E. (1999). Corporate credibility's role in consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions when a high versus a low credibility endorser is used in the ad. *Journal of Business Research*, 44(2), 109–116.

- Laskey, H. A., Seaton, B., & Nicholls, J. A. F. (1994). Effects of strategy and pictures in travel agency advertising. *Journal of Travel Research*, 32(4), 13–19.
- Leong, S. M., Ang, S. H., & Tham, L. L. (1996). Increasing brand name recall in print advertising among Asian consumers. *Journal of Advertising*, 25(2), 65–81.
- Liu, S. S. (1986). Picture-image memory of TV advertising in low-involvement situations: A psychophysiological analysis. *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 9(1), 27–59.
- MacKenzie, S. B., & Lutz, R. J. (1989). An empirical examination of the structural antecedents of attitude toward the ad in an advertising pretesting context. *Journal of Marketing*, 53(2), 48–65.
- McCullough, G. (1977). *Tourist holiday images with specific reference to tropical destinations*. Unpublished M.Sc. Dissertation, University of Surrey, UK.
- McGinnies, E., & Ward, C. D. (1980). Better liked than right: Trustworthiness and expertise as factors in credibility. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 6(3), 467–472.
- Middleton, V. T. C. (1995). *Marketing in travel and tourism* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Moeran, B. (1983). The language of Japanese tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 10(1), 93–108.
- Mossberg, L. L. (1995). Tour leaders and their importance in charter tours. *Tourism Management*, 16(6), 437–445.
- Mowen, J. C., & Brown, S. W. (1980). On explaining and predicting the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers. In K. B. Monroe (Ed.), *Advances in consumer research*, Vol. 8. (pp. 437–441). Minnesota: Association for Consumer Research.
- Murray, K. B. (1991). A test of services marketing theory: Consumer information acquisition activities. *Journal of Marketing*, 55(1), 10–25.
- Nozawa, H. (1992). A marketing analysis of Japanese outbound travel. *Tourism Management*, 13(2), 226–234.
- Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 19(3), 39–52.
- Paulhus, D. L. (1984). Social desirable responding: Some new solutions to old problems. In D. M. Buss, & N. Cantor (Eds.), *Personality psychology: Recent trends and emerging directions* (pp. 201–209). New York: Springer.
- Pechmann, C., & Stewart, D. W. (1988). Advertising repetition: A critical review of wearin and wearout. *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 11(2), 285–329.
- Prideaux, B. R. (1998). Korean outbound tourism: Australia's response. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 7(1), 93–102.
- Quiroga, I. (1990). Characteristics of package tours in Europe. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 17(2), 185–207.
- Roehl, W. S., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (1992). Risk perceptions and pleasure travel: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Travel Research*, 30(4), 17–26.
- Rubin, V., Mager, C., & Friedman, H. H. (1982). Company president versus spokesperson in television commercials. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 22(4), 31–33.
- Schmidt, C. J. (1979). The guided tour: Insulated adventure. *Urban Life*, 7(4), 441–467.
- Schuchat, M. G. (1983). Comforts of group tours. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 10(4), 465–477.
- Sheldon, P. J., & Mak, J. (1987). The demand for package tours: A mode choice model. *Journal of Travel Research*, 25(3), 13–17.
- Singh, S. N., Lessig, V. P., Kim, D., Gupta, R., & Hocutt, M. A. (2000). Does your ad have too many pictures? *Journal of Advertising Research*, 40(1/2), 11–27.
- Singh, S. N., Rothschild, M. L., & Churchill Jr., G. A. (1988). Recognition versus recall as measures of television commercial forgetting. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 25(1), 72–80.
- Stafford, M. R. (1998). Advertising sex-typed services: The effects of sex, service type, and employee type on consumer attitudes. *Journal of Advertising*, 27(2), 65–82.
- Stephens, N., & Faranda, W. T. (1993). Using employees as advertising spokespersons. *Journal of Services marketing*, 7(2), 36–46.
- Till, B. D., & Busler, M. (1998). Matching products with endorsers: Attractiveness versus expertise. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 15(6), 576–586.
- Till, B. D., & Shimp, T. A. (1998). Endorsers in advertising: The case of negative celebrity information. *Journal of Advertising*, 27(1), 67–82.
- Tourism Bureau (2000). *1999 annual survey report on ROC outbound travelers*. Taipei: Tourism Bureau.
- Tripp, C., Jensen, T. D., & Carlson, L. (1994). The effects of multiple product endorsements by celebrities on consumers' attitudes and intentions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(4), 535–547.
- Tsaur, S.-H., Tzeng, G.-H., & Wang, K.-C. (1997). Evaluating tourist risks from fuzzy perspectives. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24(4), 796–812.
- Unnava, H. R., & Burnkrant, R. E. (1991). An imagery-processing view of the role of pictures in print advertisements. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 28(2), 226–231.
- Uzzell, D. (1984). An alternative structuralist approach to the psychology of tourism marketing. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 11(1), 79–99.
- Wang, K.-C., Hsieh, A.-T., & Huan, T.-C. (2000). Critical service features in group package tour: An exploratory research. *Tourism Management*, 21(2), 177–189.
- Wang, Y., & Sheldon, P. J. (1995). The sleeping dragon awakes: The outbound Chinese travel market. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 4(4), 41–54.
- Wells, W. D. (1961). The influence of yeasaying response style. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 1(4), 1–12.
- Wicks, B. E., & Schuett, M. A. (1991). Examining the role of tourism promotion through the use of brochures. *Tourism Management*, 12(4), 301–312.
- Woodside, A. G. (1990). Measuring advertising effectiveness in destination marketing strategies. *Journal of Travel Research*, 29(2), 3–8.
- Yamamoto, D., & Gill, A. M. (1999). Emerging trends in Japanese package tourism. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38(2), 134–143.
- Yi, Y. (1990). Cognitive and affective priming effects of the context for print advertisements. *Journal of Advertising*, 19(2), 40–48.
- Zikmund, W. G. (1994). *Business research methods* (4th ed.). Florida: The Dryden Press.