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The Impact of Advertising Appeals on Consumers' Perception of an Ad in the Context of Technical Products

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Abstract

Aim. Understanding how to address consumers through advertising is one of the most important aspects when promoting a product. The primary goal of this study is to identify the impact of certain advertising appeals on consumers perception of the ad and the presented product. The message appeal, endorser type, and endorser age are examined in terms of their impact on message credibility, ad attitude, product attitude, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth intention. Product knowledge was implemented as covariate.

Method. The implemented experiment testing the research hypotheses used a 2 (rational vs emotional) x 2 (expert vs non-expert endorser) x 2 (older vs younger endorser) between-subjects design. A poster ad for a technical product was created. 263 participants were allocated into eight conditions. In this study, 18- to 28-year-old German participants were included. Thus, the study was aiming at a generation of young adults who are familiar with technical products. The participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire concerning their perception of the presented poster ad.

Results. The results indicated a significant difference between the rational and the emotional message appeal. Implementing a rational message resulted in higher mean scores for message credibility, ad attitude, product attitude, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth intention. In contrast, no significant differences between the expert and non-expert, as well as the older and younger endorser were found for the five dependent variables. Further, it was controlled for effects of product knowledge on the outcome of the dependent variables. Significant differences were found for the message appeal condition. Higher product knowledge resulted in higher mean scores of the dependent variables. However, the level of product knowledge did not influence the outcome in the endorser type and endorser age conditions.

Research Contribution. This study led to valuable insights into advertising appeals, since it revealed that the kind of message in an advertisement is more important than the characteristics of the endorser. This means that as long as a rational message is used in advertising, a younger or an older endorser can be used without influencing the effects of the ad. Also, whenever the message is rational, it is not relevant whether the endorser is an expert or a non-expert regarding the presented product.

Conclusion. An advertisement for a technical product should contain facts and technical information to have a positive effect on consumers' perception of the ad and the product. Further, the choice of the endorser is open to advertisers. As long as the message is rational, the endorser may be younger or older, or an expert or a non-expert.

1. Introduction

Today, technical products, or consumer electronics are a common part of the everyday life. It is not unusual to use technology at work, at school, or in the free time. Those products can be used for entertainment, for hobbies or several work-related tasks. Whatever the purpose of using technical products may be, the number of users has increased immensely. Those increasing numbers lead to a growing market, which results in growing competition among this product category. Subsequently, this leads to a change in advertising to stand out on the market.

Generally, when advertising a technical product, performance is the most frequently used information cue (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010). This means that ads for technical products usually contain information about the features and innovations of the product. When advertisers are delivering facts and information about a technical product, a rational message appeal is being applied. Especially for durable goods, such as technical products, rather than non-durable goods, the rational appeal is applied (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010). Furthermore, technical products are usually advertised when they are new to the market. Based on literature, a rational message is very effective when a product is new to the market (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010). The product's features and performance has improved in comparison to preceding technical products, therefore, usually the focus of an ad lies on informing consumers about those innovations.

In the following, the current situation in Germany of advertising in general is being looked at. A common way for a brand to stand out on the growing market and to connect with consumers is to use endorsement in advertisements. It could be observed that the use of testimonials and endorsers as part of an advertising strategy has become more popular. Those endorsers have been used in television commercials, in poster advertising, in the radio, and online. Especially the use of customer endorsers is used more often than before. In Germany, a well-known company using customer endorsers in advertising is the optician company Fielmann AG. The commercials of Fielmann show an interviewlike situation where customers are giving a statement and sharing their enthusiasm for the products and the company. Examples of those statements are: 'I associate a great selection, great service, and friendly consulting with Fielmann.' or 'I am completely satisfied with Fielmann'. In the case of Fielmann's advertising strategy, the endorsers' characteristics are as broad as the target group of Fielmann. Another example of a company using customer endorsers in their television commercials is the car-sell start-up WKDA GmbH (short for: 'wir kaufen dein Auto', which means: 'we buy your car'). Here, more than one customer is giving a statement in each commercial. The customer endorsers, for example, state: 'I was satisfied with the price they offered me.' or '[The process of selling] was way faster than I expected'. The statements of the customer endorsers are designed to

present the positive attributes of the company and its products. The advertisement is intended to be received as credible, genuine, and close to the target group.

Considering the increase in the use of technical products and the popularity of endorsement in advertising, this study was developed. It is interesting to combine those two developments and to see how endorsement advertising for technical products must be designed, to be successful in reaching the target group.

To examine this, the study focuses on three appeals in advertising: type of endorser, age of endorser, and message appeal. Especially examining the effects of the age of endorsers can be very helpful for marketers. The age of endorsers has not sufficiently been analyzed in advertising literature, particularly in combination with the type of endorser and the message appeal. By investigating the effects of the age of endorsers, it is possible to see how an endorser of a certain age is perceived by the target group. The age can possibly influence how the message is received, or how trustworthy the endorser appears to be. For example, people often associate age with experience. The older someone is, the more experienced he or she is assumed to be. If these assumptions are true for advertising as well, marketers need to consider the age of their endorsers.

Also, it is interesting to include message appeal in this study, even though it has been well investigated in earlier research. It is known that advertisers can facilitate their message by using either the rational appeal (arguments) or the emotional appeal (cues). However, no universal opinion exists, stating which appeal is more effective than the other. The same goes for the type of endorser. In earlier research, the different types of endorsers, such as customer and expert endorsers have been analyzed. There is no scientific consensus stating which type of endorser is more effective in advertising. Most notably, the combination of the type of endorser, the message appeal, and the age of endorser in advertising has not been uncovered yet.

Thinking about advertising from the point of a marketer, certain goals come to mind: Advertisers focus on creating an ad that is trustworthy, believable and credible to consumers. Further, an advertisement is supposed to be attractive and appealing to consumers; they have to like the ad. Also, the product that is presented is intended to create a positive attitude among consumers. Naturally, advertisers focus on arousing purchase intention of consumers. The best product is useless if no one is buying it. Additionally, the aim is to convince consumers to recommend the ad or product to others, to spread the brand and product awareness.

Based on this, this study combines the aims of advertising with the current development on the market; the increase in the use of technical products and the popular use of endorsers. This paper focuses on the relationship between message appeal, type of endorser, and age of endorser. The question is whether the aims of advertising are, depending on the combination of advertising appeals, more likely to be fulfilled. Different message appeals (rational vs. emotional), different types of endorsers (expert vs. non-expert) and the endorser age (older vs. younger) will be combined in a poster advertising and their effects will be analyzed among technical products. This leads to a set of 12 manipulations, using a 2x2x2 design.

The description above results in the following research question:

To what extent do message appeal, endorser type, and endorser age in advertising influence message credibility, ad attitude, product attitude, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth intention?

To answer the research question of this study thoroughly, the following strategy will be pursued: At first, an examination of existing literature of the topic will be presented in the theoretical background. Here, the hypotheses of the study will be developed. Afterwards, the research method, containing the preliminary tests and the main study, will be described. Next, the results of the study will be explained. Following the results, the discussion section will be executed. Here, the results will be debated, the theoretical and practical implications will be examined, and the limitations, as well as future research directions will be approached. Subsequently, a conclusion of the study will summarize the main aspects of the study.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

2.1 Advertising and its Impact

In this framework, previous research and literature that is important when discussing the impact of advertising will be elaborated. Advertising is a way to inform, remind, and persuade a certain target audience. It is a tool to create awareness about a brand's products or services (Niazi, Siddiqui, Alishah, & Hunjra, 2012). Advertising is a form of communication which aims at convincing a target audience to make a purchase decision about a product or service (Niazi, et. al, 2012; Saleem, & Abideen, 2011). When using advertising as a marketing tool, advertisers need to consider Lasswell's model of communication (1948): Who, says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect. This model is a way to determine the message of an ad and its characteristics to assure that the aim of the advertisement can be achieved.

Persuading consumers to purchase a product is one of the main objectives of advertising. The persuasion in advertising happens by using appeals (Hart & Stapleton, 1991). These include any stimuli that lead to the intention to purchase a product. An example of such a stimulus is a recommendation, which can increase the purchase intention of a consumer. Here, a reliable advertising endorser can influence the decision. When a consumer is exposed to an advertisement, he or she evaluates the information and automatically forms an attitude toward the advertisement (De Pelsmacker, Geuens, van den Bergh, 2007, p. 126). Additionally, advertisers aim at creating personal associations with the presented product (Hart & Stapleton, 1991). These associations with a product can be categorized as the attitude toward a product. Credibility of an advertisement is another important aim of advertisers. In the traditional cognitive response theory, it is said that a message which is perceived as credible leads to an increased amount of favorable thoughts (MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Olson, Toy, & Dover, 1982).

Moreover, an important factor that advertisers aim at, word-of-mouth intention of consumers. WOM is defined as person-to-person communication between a non-commercial sender and receiver about a brand, product, or organization (Harrison-Walker, 2001). A recommendation can be in the form of reviews of other consumers. In advertising, such recommendations are often used by implementing a customer endorser who recommends the product to consumers. Research that consumers who have experienced a product either positively or negatively, intend to share their experiences through using word-of-mouth (Holmes & Lett, 1977; Richings, 1983).

All in all, these understandings of the mentioned aspects of advertising, suggest that message credibility, attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the product, purchase intention, and WOM intention are all part of advertising and the process of reaching a target audience.

2.2 Message Appeal

When considering Lasswell's (1948) model of communication, advertisers must think about *what* is said in an advertisement. Different approaches can be implemented when presenting a product. The message can focus on informing the receivers by stating facts (Rosselli, Skelly & Mackie, 1995), or it can aim at evoking an affective reaction (Edwards, 1990). These two types of message appeals are called the rational and the emotional message appeal. Depending on the choice that is made, the message has a different effect on the message receivers. The rational and emotional appeals have been studied in earlier research. The different insights on the appeals are based on Copeland's (1924) original proposition stating that purchases are either influenced by rational or emotional motives. According to Copeland, the difference between rational and emotional purchase intentions is that rational intentions are based on the attributes of the product, and emotional intentions are depending on the use and value of the product to the consumer. Based on these observations, advertisers developed the rational and emotional message appeals.

2.2.1. Rational Appeal

When advertisers create an advertisement and their aim is to inform the consumers about the product by presenting facts and information, a rational appeal is being used (Rosselli, Skelly & Mackie, 1995). Indicators of a rational appeal in advertising are features, practical details, and verifiable, factually relevant cues which can help the receiver to evaluate the advertised product (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010). When implementing a rational appeal in an ad, information cues are applied. Classifications of such information cues are price, quality, performance, components, availability, packaging, warranties, offers, new ideas, or safety (Resnik & Stern, 1977; Kotler & Armstrong, 1994, p. 468). An example for a rational appeal when advertising a smartphone and emphasizing the performance of the smartphone is: 'The smartphone has a battery service life of 72h'.

2.2.2. Emotional Appeal

Advertisers can also make use of the emotional appeal which, in contrast to the rational appeal, focuses on evoking affective response, such as positive emotions about the product from consumers (Edwards, 1990) rather than to make receivers think (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). These positive

emotional appeals can, for example, be love, humor, pride or joy (Kotler & Armstrong, 1994). By using an emotional appeal in an advertisement, the message is supposed to arouse a positive feeling about the product (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999). Additionally, the focus of an emotional appeal lies on the experiential side of consumption (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999). Here, an example when advertising a smartphone and emphasizing the experiential side of the product is: 'The smartphone is the best on the market!'

Empirical evidence about the effectiveness of message appeals shows that, in general, advertising messages are perceived as more credible when a sincere and rational argumentation about the advantages of the product is presented (Chandy, MacInnis & Thaivanich, 2001).

By generating information explicitly and directly related to a product, rational appeals lead to higher attention of consumers and lead to a more favorable attitude toward the product and the advertising (Aaker & Norris, 1982).

Other research has shown that rational appeals, require more thinking, because they provide more information than emotional appeals and are, therefore, more favorable among consumers and lead to higher purchase intentions (Golden & Johnson, 1983). Based on the theoretical knowledge, the rational appeal is assumed to be more effective in advertising a smartphone and its performance in comparison to the emotional appeal. Expressed formally:

H1: When a rational message appeal is used in advertising instead of an emotional appeal

- (a) the message credibility is higher.
- (b) the attitude toward the ad is more favorable.
- (c) the attitude toward the product is more favorable.
- (d) the purchase intention is higher.
- (e) the WOM intention is higher.

2.3 Endorser Type

Going back to Lasswell's model of communication (1948), when trying to reach an audience, advertisers must consider *who* delivers the message to the audience. This relates to endorsement advertising. Such endorsers are used to make the advertisement as effective and attractive as possible, to attract consumers' attention, to influence the attitude toward a product positively, or to inform and persuade the consumer (Feick & Higie, 1992). In literature, endorsers are defined as persons

recommending products or services explicitly or implicitly in advertisements (Meijer, 2010). Endorsers can be used to draw attention to the advertisement or product and they are able to increase the consumer's interest in the product based on their recommendation (Feick & Higie, 1992; Erdogan, 1999; Pornpitakpan, 2004). The effectiveness of endorsement marketing seems to depend on two factors: the type of endorser (Freiden, 1984) and the type of product (Friedman & Friedman, 1979).

2.3.1. Expert Endorsers

Endorsers are often experts, who are used to assure the quality or high technology of a product (De Pelsmacker, et. al, p. 277). The crucial characteristics of an expert endorser are expertise, awareness, and attractiveness (Chi, Yeh, & Tsai, 2011). According to the Endorser Credibility Model (Hovland & Weiss, 1951), the effectiveness of persuasion is influenced by the endorser's credibility, which is dependent on the endorser's perceived expertise and the perceived trustworthiness (De Pelsmacker, et. al, p. 227). An example of an expert endorser in relation to smartphones is a sales consultant in the domain of smartphones, because of his or her knowledge and experience with smartphones.

2.3.2. Customer Endorsers

Customer endorsers are ordinary people who are stating that a product and its features are desirable (De Pelsmacker, et. al, p. 216). Customer endorsers are effective when the message receiver can identify himself or herself with the endorser (Feick & Higie, 1992), because the use of customer endorsers depends on the positive membership reference group effect (De Pelsmacker, et. al, p. 216). This type of endorser is used, because it can be relatable, the endorser can recommend products based on his or her experience with it, and he or she can communicate the product attributes to the consumer (Meijer, 2010). However, customer endorsers can lead to irritation in consumers (De Pelsmacker, et. al, p. 217) when they are not perceived as believable and honest.

Empirical evidence suggests that expert endorsers are able to attract attention and increase the customer's trust in the endorsers' recommendation, and therefore, deliver a message that is perceived as credible (Chi, Yeh, & Tsai, 2011).

Furthermore, expert endorsers are not evoking irritation in consumers, but rather positive affective responses, compared to customer endorsers (De Pelsmacker, et. al, p. 227), which influences consumers' attitude toward the ad and the product positively. In general, based on the authority principle (Cialdini, 1984), it is expected that an expert endorser is persuading consumers more easily than a non-expert endorser to purchase the presented product.

After examining previous literature about advertising endorsers, the expert endorser is assumed to have more positive effects on the dependent variables than the non-expert endorser. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H2: When an expert endorser is used in advertising instead of a non-expert endorser

- (a) the message credibility is higher.
- (b) the attitude toward the ad is more favorable.
- (c) the attitude toward the product is more favorable.
- (*d*) the purchase intention is higher.
- (e) the WOM intention is higher.

2.4 Endorser Age

Another aspect when considering *who* delivers the message in an advertisement is the age of the endorser. An endorser, whether it is an expert or a non-expert, can be part of a certain age category. The age of an endorser is important, because endorsers represent a product or brand, and by doing this, they are part of a certain group which is supposed to be in alignment with the target group (Nelson and Smith, 1988). Considering this, a feeling of similarity can be aroused based on apparent demographic characteristics such as age. Consequently, having the same age and feeling similar to each other can lead to an increased message acceptance and persuasion (Simons, Berkowitz & Moyer, 1970). Furthermore, the age of a person can influence the perception of this person, because of age related stereotypes. In relation to smartphones, or IT related tasks, older people are prejudged to be slower in performance than younger people, because they usually have less experience with the subject matter and less knowledge about technical products (Czaja & Sharit, 1993). Therefore, the question when advertising a smartphone is, whether endorsers of different age categories are leading to different results in the effectiveness of the advertisement. Some research suggests that there is no difference between a younger endorser and an older endorser regarding the influence of the endorser age on the effectiveness of the message appeal (Klock & Traylor, 1983; Milliman & Erffmeyer, 1990). They also found that the age of the endorser did not affect the respondents' purchase intention or attitude toward the ad.

On the other hand, research shows that there are differences between a younger and an older endorser in the perceived credibility. In general, when endorsers are perceived as having knowledge or expertise related to the product, they are perceived as credible (Belch & Belch, 1995). According to Bristol (1996), experience and knowledge are usually linked to age. Therefore, the more advanced the age of a person is, the more experience and knowledge are expected from this person. This assumption is supported by Milliman and Erffmeyer (1990) who found that respondents evaluated older and middle-aged endorsers to be more credible than younger endorsers. This leads to the supposition that a message presented by an older endorser is perceived as more credible than the same message delivered by a younger endorser. The findings of previous research lead to the following hypotheses:

H3: When an older endorser is used in an advertisement instead of a younger endorser

- (a) the message credibility is higher.
- (b) the attitude toward the ad is more favorable.
- (c) the attitude toward the product is more favorable.
- (d) the purchase intention is higher.
- (e) the WOM intention is higher.

2.5 Interaction Message Appeal, Endorser Type, Endorser Age

Next to investigating the effects of message appeal, endorser type, and endorser age separately, it is interesting to see how these three advertising appeals interact. At first, the rational appeal is assumed to be more effective than the emotional appeal, the expert endorser is assumed to be more effective than the vounger endorser. Reason for this assumption is the nature of the mentioned appeals. The rational appeal is designed to inform about the product by presenting facts and, therefore, reducing uncertainty. The expert endorser is known for his or her expertise, credibility and trustworthiness which are based on his or her knowledge. Furthermore, advanced age is associated with expertise and knowledge. Based on this, it is expected that a rational message appeal in combination with an older, expert endorser has the highest, positive influence on the dependent variables. Reason for this assumption is, that all three appeals are aiming at presenting logical argumentation instead of emotional associations. The similarity in the aim of these appeals explains why their combination is expected to be the most effective combination. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H4: When a rational appeal is used in combination with an older expert endorser instead of any other combination of the message appeal, endorser type, and endorser age,

- (a) the message credibility is higher.
- (b) the attitude toward the ad is more favorable.
- (c) the attitude toward the product is more favorable.
- (d) the purchase intention is higher.
- (e) the WOM intention is higher.

The research model can be seen below (figure 1). The assumed relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variables are presented. Message appeal, endorser type, and endorser age are each expected to have a main effect on the dependent variables. Also, interaction effects between message appeal and endorser type, between message appeal and endorser age, and between endorser type and endorser age are expected. The product knowledge is functioning as a covariate. It is expected to have an effect on the dependent variables, but the product knowledge is not manipulated.

Figure 1. Model



3. Method

3.1 Research Design

For this study, a 2 x 2 x 2 full factorial between-subjects design was implemented to test the research hypotheses. To measure the five dependent variables a questionnaire was designed. The dependent variables were: message credibility, ad attitude, product attitude, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth intention. The independent variables of this study were message appeal (rational vs. emotional), endorser type (expert vs. non-expert), and endorser age (older vs. younger). To test the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables, eight versions of a poster advertising were created. As part of the questionnaire, the participants were exposed to one of the eight conditions (see table 1). Furthermore, product knowledge was implemented as a covariate. It was categorized into low and high level of product knowledge. Product knowledge was expected to have an influence on the outcomes of the dependent variables. It was not manipulated, but the analysis of the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables was controlled by product knowledge.

	Condition	Abbreviation
1	Rational – Older - Expert	ROE
2	Rational – Older – Non-expert	RON
3	Rational – Younger – Expert	RYE
4	Rational – Younger – Non-expert	RYN
5	Emotional – Older - Expert	EOE
6	Emotional – Older – Non-expert	EON
7	Emotional – Younger – Expert	EYE
8	Emotional – Younger – Non-expert	EYN

Table 1. Overview of the eight conditions

3.2 Procedure

The aim of this survey was to find out about the attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of participants toward the presented poster ad, therefore, a questionnaire was used. The data was collected by using an online questionnaire which was created with the program Qualtrics. A web link was created. The link was distributed through the platform poll-pool, through SONA-systems at University of Twente, by social media, and email. Participating in this survey was completely confidential and anonymous. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of the eight conditions. In each condition, a simulated poster ad was presented. Apart from the eight different versions of the advertisement, the questionnaire was identical for each condition. Eight advertisements were created by integrating the message appeal (rational or emotional), the endorser type (expert or non-expert) and the endorser age (older or younger). The background of the ad, the smartphone and the endorsers' postures were the same, therefore, these aspects would not influence the perception of the advertisements. All participants were first asked to answer questions about their product category knowledge. Then they were exposed to the manipulations and were asked to look at the advertisement thoroughly. After that, the questions which were part of the manipulations check were asked. At last, the items measuring the dependent variables were presented.

3.3 Preliminary Tests

Before designing the manipulations for the main study, three preliminary tests were conducted (see Appendix A). The aim was to assure the validity of the study and to prevent any inconsistencies in the manipulated materials. Each preliminary test consisted of 10 German participants.

3.3.1. Technical Product

The first preliminary test was used to find the right technical product for the main study. This was done by listing ten technical products which were presented to the participants to rank them according to their technical features. The participants were asked to rank the products on a 7-point Likert scale from (1) non-technical to (7) technical (see figure 2). The set of products was based on earlier studies (Avicenna, 2016). It was chosen for products of a similar price range to assure comparability. Furthermore, no gender specific products were chosen to include both male and female participants. Additional to the list of products, a definition of technical features was given. This definition was describing technical products as products which require learning to fully use it. The given characteristics were: (1) The use of the product requires (a little more) effort. (2) The understanding of all functions of the product requires time and effort. (3) The product cannot be used immediately without prior knowledge. Those characteristics were based on previous studies (Chen & Xie, 2008; Mackiewicz, 2009). For the main study, the product that scored the highest mean value was chosen, because it was associated as the product with the most technical characteristics. This product was a smartphone. For the list of products and their mean scores and standard deviations see table 2.

Figure 2. Ranking of products according to their technical features.

Wie ordnest Du die technischen Eigenschaften der folgenden Produkte auf einer Skala von 1 bis 7 (1 = keine technischen Eigenschaften, 7 = sehr technische Eigenschaften) ein? Beachte bei Deiner Einschätzung die vorher angegebenen Informationen über technische und nicht technische Produkteigenschaften.

	Nicht technis	ch					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Drucker		\bigcirc				\bigcirc	0
Kaffeemaschine	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
Action Kamera (z.B. GoPro)	\odot	\bigcirc	\odot	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\odot	\odot
Netbook	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
eBook (z.B. Kindle)	0	0	0	0	0		0
Lautsprecher	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
Navigationsgerät		\odot	\odot		\odot	\odot	\odot
Smartphone	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
Kopfhörer (z.B. Beats)	0	0	\odot	\odot	\odot	\odot	\odot
Staubsauger	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc

Table 2. Mean scores and standard deviation for ranked products.

Product	M (SD)
Smartphone	6.7 (.48)
Netbook	6.6 (.52)
Action camera	6.5 (.71)
Printer	6.2 (.97)
Navigation device	6.1 (.99)
eBook	5.7 (.95)
Coffee machine	5.5 (.97)
Loudspeaker	5.2 (1.23)
Vacuum cleaner	5.1 (1.23)
Headphones	5.0 (1.25)

7-point Likert Scale. 7=technical, 1=non-technical

3.3.2. Expert Profession

The second preliminary test was designed to choose a profession which was used as the expert endorser in the main study. The aim of this preliminary test was to identify a profession which was associated with being knowledgeable and experienced related to smartphones. By doing the first and the second preliminary test, the manipulation of the independent variable endorser type could be determined. In this preliminary test, the participants were instructed to rank a list of pressions from (1) having the highest level of expertise in relation to smartphones to (8) having the lowest level of expertise in relation to smartphones (see figure 3). The profession with the lowest mean value was considered to have the highest level of expertise in relation to smartphones. These professions were collected from several career forums on the internet. The criterion for including the professions was the relation to smartphones or technical products in general. The ranked professions and their mean scores and standard deviations can be seen in table 3. The profession with the lowest mean score, indicating the highest level of expertise was the software developer and was, therefore, used to illustrate the expert endorser in the main study. After determining the profession suitable for advertising a smartphone as an expert, a suit, a button-down shirt, and a tie were chosen as the clothing for the person representing the software developer to further emphasize the status of being an expert.

Figure 3. Ranking of professions according to their level of expertise.

Wen würdest du in Bezug auf Smartphones und anhand der Berufsbezeichnung am ehesten als Experten bezeichnen?

Erstelle ein Ranking der aufgelisteten Berufe. Platziere die Berufsbezeichnung, die du am ehesten als Experten bezeichnen würdest, an erster Stelle und die Berufsbezeichnung, die du am wenigsten als Experten bezeichnen würdest, an letzter Stelle.

Klicke die einzelnen Berufe an und ziehe sie an die entsprechende Stelle, um das Ranking zu erstellen.

•	Software Entwickler	1
•	IT Support Service Mitarbeiter	2
•	Handyhersteller	3
•	Marktforscher (Bereich Konsumgüter)	4
•	Verkaufsberater in einem Handyshop	5
•	IT Systemelektroniker	6
•	Kaufmann für Telekommunikation	7
•	Fachberater in einem Elektronik-Fachmarkt	8

Profession	M (SD)
Software developer	3.3 (2.36)
Smartphone manufacturer	3.5 (1.43)
IT support service employee	3.7 (2.3)
Sales consultant in a phone shop	4.0 (2.21)
IT systems technician	4.2 (2.04)
Consultant in a consumer electronics center	4.4 (2.68)
Merchant of telecommunications	5.9 (1.66)
Market researcher (area of consumer goods)	7.0 (1.33)

Table 3. Mean scores and standard deviations for ranked professions.

Ranking from 1 to 8. 1=high level of expertise, 8=low level of expertise

3.3.3. Stimuli Material

The third preliminary test was conducted to test the clarity of the manipulated material. The aim was to assure that the manipulations were successfully implemented. This means, (1) that the software developer was perceived as expert, and the customer was perceived as non-expert, (2) that the rational message was perceived as rational, and the emotional message was perceived as emotional, (3) and that the older endorser was perceived as older, and the younger endorser was perceived as younger.

Based on the theoretical framework of this study, a rational and an emotional message were created. Both messages were describing the smartphone that was presented in the poster ad. The rational appeal was containing facts such as: 'The smartphone has a 4.7'' AMOLED display. It has an 18-megapixel camera, and 4K videography, and 72h battery service life'. The emotional appeal was containing an opinion, namely: 'I recommend this smartphone to everyone! It is way ahead of every other smartphone. It's the best on the market!' The participants were asked to rank both the rational and the emotional message on a 5-point Likert scale (1: disagree, 2: somewhat disagree, 3: neither disagree, nor agree, 4 somewhat agree, 5: agree). The items in this case were: (1) 'The message contains facts.', (2) 'The message contains the feelings of the presenter'. The first two items were reversed, when presenting the emotional message, also, the last two items were reversed when the rational message (M=4.65, SD=.77) and the scores of the emotional message (M=1.90, SD=.44); t (9) = 14.90, p < .000.

Afterwards, the participants were exposed to the two types of endorsers. The expert who was labelled as software engineer, and who was wearing a suit, a button-down shirt, and a tie was presented next to the non-expert, who was labelled as customer, and who was wearing a shirt. The participants were asked to rank the level of expertise of the endorser in relation to smartphones on a 5-point Likert scale (1: disagree, 2: somewhat disagree, 3: neither disagree, nor agree, 4 somewhat agree, 5: agree). The used items were: 'The person is experienced', 'The person is knowledgeable.', 'The person is qualified'. The test results show that there is was a significant difference in the associated level of expertise between the scores of the expert (M=4.27, SD=.60), and the scores of the non-expert (M=2.57, SD=.93); t (9) = 22.32, p < .000.

Furthermore, both the younger and the older endorser were presented to the participants (see figure 4). Here, the participants were asked how old they assumed the endorser to be. The age categories of 20-30 years and 45-60 years were given. Here, all participants were assuming the younger endorser to be between 20-30 years old, and the older endorser to be between 45-60 years old. Based on these three preliminary tests, the manipulations for the main study were designed.

Figure 4. Preliminary test of age variable

Wie alt schätzt du die folgenden Personen ein?



Ich schätze die Person auf... 20-35 Jahre 45-60 Jahre



Ich schätze die Person auf... 20-35 Jahre 45-60 Jahre

3.4 Stimuli

The stimulus material that was used in this study was a poster ad which was manipulated (see Appendix B). The product that was advertised was a smartphone. The company's name of the smartphone - 'CTE Neo Plus' - was fictional to avoid prior associations with an existing brand or

product. The product choice within the category of technical products was based on the results of the first preliminary test. The aim of the ad was to test the effects of the independent variables message appeal, endorser type, and endorser age. Each variable had two levels, therefore, eight versions of the ad were created.

The levels of the message appeal were rational and emotional. Four of the eight versions of the ad were containing the rational message, and four versions were containing the emotional message. The messages were based on the results of a preliminary test. The rational message was: 'The CTE Neo Plus with: 4.7'' AMOLED Display, 18-megapixel camera, 4K videography, 72h battery service life.' The emotional message was: 'I recommend the CTE Neo Plus to everyone! It is way ahead of every other smartphone. It's the best on the market!'

The endorser type consisted of an expert and a non-expert. The same person was representing an expert and a non-expert, only the profession and the clothing changed. The expert was portrayed by introducing a smartphone related profession. The profession was software engineer. This was based on a preliminary test, determining a profession which had a high level of expertise in relation to smartphones. Furthermore, the expert endorser was wearing a suit, a button-down shirt, and a tie to emphasize the level of expertise. This is based on Cialdini's (1987) principle of persuasion: authority. According to this, clothing and a certain title can influence the perceived level of authority and expertise. In contrast to the expert, the non-expert was wearing a shirt, and was labelled as customer of CTE Neo Plus.

The third independent variable, that was manipulated, was endorser age. It had the levels older endorser and younger endorser. Supported by a preliminary test, one endorser was 54 years old, and the other was 25 years old. Taking the independent variables with each two levels into account, eight manipulated poster ads were created. Apart from the manipulated message, the endorser type, and the endorser age, the poster ad was identical. This means that the same smartphone was used in each condition, as well as the same background, and the same posture of the endorsers.

3.5 Participants

The participants who were included in this study ranged from the age of 18 to 28. Therefore, the participants were young adults. This generation is sometimes called 'digital natives'. It was the first generation to grow up with new technologies such as the internet (Prensky, 2001). This generation was familiar with technical products such as computers, smartphones, or video games. It is said that the thinking and processing of information is fundamentally different from earlier generations,

because of the differences in experience (Prensky, 2001). This age cohort was chosen for this study, because of the familiarity with technical products and the differences in processing information, and to find out about the best approach in advertising to reach consumers between 18 and 28. Furthermore, all participants were from Germany.

There was a total of 270 participants filling out the questionnaire. 7 questionnaires were excluded, because the answering of the questions was incomplete. Thus, 263 questionnaires were used. 69% of the participants were female, and 31% were male. Regarding the educational achievement, 93% of them graduated from high school (Abitur) and 5% graduated with a Bachelor's degree. The demographic information of the participants per condition are illustrated in table 4.

	Condition							
	ROE	RON	RYE	RYN	EOE	EON	EYE	EYN
Participants	29	44	28	32	36	28	34	32
Gender								
Male	7	17	6	12	9	8	12	11
Female	22	27	22	20	27	20	22	21
Age								
Mean	21.59	20.10	21.23	21.00	22.16	20.92	20.36	21.33
SD	2.840	1.619	3.011	2.558	3.089	2.244	2.077	3.076
Education								
Lower Secondary								1
Middle School				1				
High-school	23	37	18	23	27	22	29	22
Bachelor	2	1	3		1	2	1	2

Table 4. Demographics of participants

3.6 Measurements

The constructs which were used as dependent variables in this study and the items to measure these constructs, were derived from previous research (see Appendix C). Such constructs were message credibility, ad attitude, product attitude, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth intention. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree was used to measure the

constructs. This scale was chosen, because a Likert scale is a suitable instrument for measuring attitudes, feelings and opinions (Likert, 1967).

Measurements of message credibility contained three items such as persuading, convincing, and trustworthy (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). The measurement of ad attitude consisted of four items namely: interesting, appealing, enjoyable, and pleasant, which were adapted from Spears and Singh (2004). The measurement of product attitude involved four items such as interesting, appealing, fulfills my requirement, and excites my curiosity (Spears & Singh, 2004). The measurement of purchase intention consisted of three items, such as intention to buy, and tendency to buy and were adapted from Rizwan, Qayyum, Qadeer and Javed (2014). The measurement for word-of-mouth intention included four items, namely, recommending to friends, recommending to someone seeking advice, speaking positively about the product, and encouraging friends to buy the product (Brown, Barry, Dacin & Gunst, 2005).

Further, the reliability of the items was examined by examining Cronbach's alpha values. The message credibility subscale consisted of 4 items (α = .870). After removing one item, the Cronbach's alpha increased to .899. Therefore, the MC4_r item ('Meiner Meinung nach ist die Werbung nicht überzeugend') was excluded from further analysis. The ad attitude subscale consisted of 4 items (α = .725). When calculating without AA4_r ('Die Werbung wirkt auf mich nicht einnehmend'), Cronbach's alpha increased to .873. This item was removed from further analysis. Next, the product attitude subscale consisted of 5 items (α = .843). Here, the PA4_r item was removed, because Cronbach's alpha increased to .864 without this item ('Das Smartphone ist belanglos für mich'). Furthermore, the purchase intention subscale consisted of 4 items (α = .824). In this case, too, the exclusion of one item lead to an increased Cronbach's alpha of .834. (PI3_r, 'Ich erwäge nicht, das Smartphone zu kaufen'). Lastly, the word-of-mouth intention subscale consisted of 5 items (α = .791). The WI4_r item ('Ich würde Freunden von diesem Smartphone abraten') was removed, therefore, the Cronbach's alpha increased to .896. Looking at the Cronbach's alpha values of the subscales, the items were found to be highly reliable. The items were reliable, because they were adopted from earlier research, therefore, their reliability and validity have been proven in earlier research.

3.7 Manipulation Check

A manipulation check was performed during the questionnaire to see whether the manipulations of the material, thus the independent variables, were implemented effectively. Therefore, directly after being exposed to the manipulation material, the participants were asked to answer the questions functioning as manipulation check.

First, questions were asked to check the manipulation of the message appeal. It was asked whether the message in the ad was containing facts or objective information about the product, and whether the message was containing emotions and an opinion of the person in the ad. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the manipulations for the rational and the emotional appeal conditions. There is a significant difference in the scores for the rational message (M=3.90, SD=.73), and the emotional message (M=1.84, SD=.64) conditions, t (261) = 24.47, p = .000. This leads to the assumption that the message appeal was successfully manipulated. Therefore, the participants who were exposed to the rational message noticed that the message contained facts and technical information about the product, and the participants who were exposed to the rational message noticed that the message to the emotional message noticed that the message was containing an opinion and feelings of the endorser.

After this, the questions about the endorser type condition were asked. It was asked whether the person in the ad was qualified to talk about the product, whether he was experienced and whether he was an expert regarding the product category. When conducting an independent-samples t-test, it was shown that there is a significant difference in the scores for the expert (M=3.08, SD=1.14), and non-expert (M=2.34, SD=.88) conditions, t (213) = 5.33, p = .000. These findings suggest that the manipulation of the endorser type is effectively implemented in the manipulation material. Thus, based on the profession and the clothing, the participants identified the expert endorser to have a higher level of expertise than the customer endorser.

The last manipulation check was concerning the endorser age. Here, it was asked how old the person in the ad seemed to be. The given age categories were 20-30 and 45-60. 97% of the participants could fill in the correct age category. For this manipulation check, an independent-samples t-test was conducted. There is a significant difference in the scores (ranging from 1 to 2) for the younger endorser (M=1.04, SD=.20) and older endorser (M=1.86, SD=.35) conditions, t (198) = -19.82, p = .000. This leads to the conclusion that the manipulation of the endorser age was successfully conducted. Therefore, the age difference between the endorsers was clearly noticeable.

4. **Results**

4.1 Main Effects

4.1.1. Message Appeal

In table 5, the mean values and standard deviations for the effect of message appeal on the dependent measures are presented. For all dependent measurements, the mean values of the rational message appeal are higher than the mean values of the emotional message appeal. This means that a rational message appeal results in higher message credibility, ad attitude, product attitude, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth intention than an emotional message appeal.

Construct	Rational	Emotional
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Message Credibility	2.857 (.071)	1.610 (.072)
Ad Attitude	2.081 (.065)	1.592 (.065)
Product Attitude	2.779 (.073)	1.938 (.073)
Purchase Intention	2.024 (.065)	1.495 (.065)
WOM Intention	2.245 (.063)	1.461 (.064)

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of main effect of message appeal on dependent variables

Values on a 5-point Likert scale. 1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree

A factorial MANOVA was conducted to compare the main effects of message appeal on message credibility, ad attitude, product attitude, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth intention. Additionally, a MANCOVA was conducted to examine whether the covariate product knowledge had an effect on the results of message appeal (table 6). The results prove that message appeal had statistically significant effects on all the dependent measures, with the mean scores being higher for the rational appeal compared to the emotional appeal. Subsequently, hypotheses 1 (a-e) were supported. Further, it was controlled for effects of the level of product knowledge. It shows that there was no statistically significant difference in message appeal based on the level of product knowledge.

Table 6. Results of MANOVA and MANCOVA (including product knowledge as covariate) for message appeal on dependent variables

	Method	Message Appeal	Product Knowledge
		F (P-Value)	F (P-Value)
Message Credibility	MANOVA	150.70 (.000)	-
	MANCOVA	150.64 (.000)	.98 (.32)
Ad Attitude	MANOVA	29.75 (.000)	-
	MANCOVA	29.80 (.000)	1.66 (.199)
Product Attitude	MANOVA	65.99 (.000)	-
	MANCOVA	66.38 (.000)	2.75 (.098)
Purchase Intention	MANOVA	32.32 (.000)	-
	MANCOVA	32.34 (.000)	1.35 (.246)
WOM Intention	MANOVA	81.54 (.000)	-
	MANCOVA	81.23 (.000)	.001 (.971)

Note: significant at the .001 level

4.1.2. Endorser Type

In table 7, the mean values and standard deviations for the effect of endorser type on the dependent variables are shown. There is no clear direction of the values, nor are there broad differences in the values for the expert and non-expert condition. Therefore, there is no clear tendency that one conditions leads to higher scores than the other condition regarding the dependent variables.

Construct Expert Non-expert M (SD) M(SD) **Message Credibility** 2.21 (1.05) 2.27 (.98) Ad Attitude 1.79 (.77) 1.90 (.77) **Product Attitude** 2.34 (.92) 2.34 (.92) **Purchase Intention** 1.79 (.77) 1.74 (.78) **WOM Intention** 1.82 (.77) 1.91 (.86)

Table 7. Descriptive statistics of main effect of endorser type on dependent variables

Values on a 5-point Likert scale. 1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree

A factorial MANOVA was conducted to compare the main effects of endorser type on the dependent variables. Moreover, a MANCOVA was conducted to examine whether the covariate product

knowledge had effects on the results of the endorser age. The results for the MANOVA and MANCOVA analyses are presented in table 8. Endorser type had no statistically significant effects on the dependent variables. Therefore, hypotheses 2 (a-e) were rejected. Additionally, there was no statistically significant difference in endorser age based on the level of product knowledge.

	Method	Endorser Type	Product Knowledge
		F (P-Value)	F (P-Value)
Message Credibility	MANOVA	.20 (.654)	-
	MANCOVA	.19 (.656)	.650 (.421)
Ad Attitude	MANOVA	1.13 (.290)	-
	MANCOVA	1.12 (.291)	1.51 (.221)
Product Attitude	MANOVA	.007 (.936)	-
	MANCOVA	.007 (.931)	2.232 (.136)
Purchase Intention	MANOVA	.347 (.556)	-
	MANCOVA	.352 (.553)	1.23 (.268)
WOM Intention	MANOVA	.899 (.344)	-
	MANCOVA	.896 (.345)	.000 (.984)

Table 8. Results of MANOVA and MANCOVA (including product knowledge as covariate) for endorser type on dependent variables

Note: significant at the .001 level

4.1.3. Endorser Age

In table 9, the mean values and standard deviations for the effect of endorser age on the dependent measures are presented. For all dependent measurements, the mean values of the younger endorser are slightly lower than the mean values of the older endorser. This means that there is a tendency that the older endorser leads to higher message credibility, ad attitude, product attitude, purchase intention, and WOM intention.

Table 9.	Descriptive	statistics c	of main	effect of	endorser	age on	dependent	variables
I WOW /.	Descriptive	building c	/ main		Chaorber	uge on	acpendent	variables
						<u> </u>	1	

Construct	Younger	Older
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Message Credibility	2.16 (1.02)	2.32 (1.00)
Ad Attitude	1.81 (.72)	1.89 (.82)
Product Attitude	2.35 (.89)	2.39 (.82)
Purchase Intention	1.70 (.72)	1.82 (.95)
WOM Intention	1.78 (.79)	1.95 (.84)

Values on a 5-point Likert scale. 1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree

A factorial MANOVA was conducted to compare the main effects of endorser age on the dependent variables. Furthermore, a MANCOVA was conducted to examine whether the covariate product knowledge influenced the results of the endorser age. The results for the MANOVA and MANCOVA analyses are illustrated in table 10. Looking at the results, endorser age had no statistically significant effects on the dependent variables. Therefore, hypotheses 3 (a-e) were rejected. Furthermore, there was no statistically significant difference in endorser age based on the level of product knowledge.

	Method	Endorser Type	Product Knowledge
		F (P-Value)	F (P-Value)
Message Credibility	MANOVA	1.519 (.219)	-
	MANCOVA	1.392 (.239)	.531 (.467)
Ad Attitude	MANOVA	.525 (.469)	-
	MANCOVA	.415 (.520)	1.400 (.238)
Product Attitude	MANOVA	.165 (.685)	-
	MANCOVA	.095 (.759)	2.161 (.143)
Purchase Intention	MANOVA	1.702 (.193)	-
	MANCOVA	1.521 (.219)	1.049 (.307)
WOM Intention	MANOVA	2.996 (.085)	-
	MANCOVA	3.002 (.084)	.018 (.895)

Table 10. Results of MANOVA and MANCOVA (including product knowledge as covariate) for endorser age on dependent variables

Note: significant at the .001 level

4.2 Two-way Interaction Effects

4.2.1. Message Appeal and Endorser Type

Looking at the results of the MANOVA analysis, no significant interaction effects between message appeal and endorser type could be found. The means that are illustrated in table 11 indicate, that for all dependent measures, the rational appeal scores higher than the emotional appeal. However, there is no distinct difference in the scores for the expert and non-expert factor. This means that both the values for the expert and non-expert are higher in combination with a rational appeal rather than an emotional appeal.

	Ex	pert	Non-Expert			
Construct	Rational Emotional		Rational	Emotional		
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Message Credibility	2.941 (.107)	1.616 (.097)	2.753 (.094)	1.604 (.106)		
Ad Attitude	2.061 (.098)	1.573 (.088)	2.100 (.086)	1.612 (.096)		
Product Attitude	2.829 (.110)	2.002 (.099)	2.729 (.096)	1.874 (.108)		
Purchase Intention	2.110 (.098)	1.526 (.088)	1.938 (.086)	1.464 (.096)		
WOM Intention	2.222 (.095)	1.489 (.086)	2.268 (.0843)	1.434 (.094)		

Table 11. Descriptive statistics of the interaction effect between message appeal and endorser type

Values on a 5-point Likert scale. 1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree

4.2.2. Message Appeal and Endorser Age

There is no interaction effect between message appeal and endorser age. However, the scores of the rational message appeal are higher for all dependent measures compared to the scores of the emotional message appeal (see table 12). The scores of the two levels of the endorser age do not differ. Consequently, this means that the rational message appeal results in higher scores for both the older and the younger advertising endorser.

Table 12. Descriptive statistics of the interaction effect between message appeal and endorser age

	Ol	der	Younger			
Construct	Rational Emotional		Rational	Emotional		
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Message Credibility	2.934 (.097)	1.591 (.103)	2.760 (.105)	1.630 (.100)		
Ad Attitude	2.107 (.088)	1.595 (.094)	2.055 (.095)	1.590 (.091)		
Product Attitude	2.799 (.099)	1.902 (.105)	2.759 (.107)	1.974 (.102)		
Purchase Intention	2.083 (.088)	1.535 (.094)	1.965 (.096)	1.455 (.091)		
WOM Intention	2.348 (.086)	1.477 (.091)	2.142 (.093)	1.446 (.088)		

Values on a 5-point Likert scale. 1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree

4.2.3. Endorser Type and Endorser Age

When analyzing the interaction effect between endorser type and endorser age, there is no statistically significant interaction effect. Moreover, comparing the mean values between the endorser type and endorser age, there are no distinct differences (see table 13). This leads to the conclusion that the age of the endorser in combination with the type of endorser do not differ in terms of the dependent measurements of this study.

	01	der	Younger			
Construct	Expert	Non-expert	Expert	Non-expert		
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Message Credibility	2.339 (.101)	2.185 (.099)	2.218 (.103)	2.172 (.101)		
Ad Attitude	1.857 (.092)	1.845 (.090)	1.778 (.094)	1.867 (.092)		
Product Attitude	2.441 (.103)	2.250 (.101)	2.390 (.106)	2.344 (1.03)		
Purchase Intention	1.899 (0.92)	1.719 (.090)	1.737 (.094)	1.682 (.092)		
WOM Intention	1.897 (.092)	1.929 (.088)	1.815 (.092)	1.773 (.090)		

Table 13. Descriptive statistics of the interaction effect between endorser type and endorser age

Values on a 5-point Likert scale. 1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree

4.3 Three-way Interaction Effects

Lastly, by looking at the scores of the message appeal, endorser type, and endorser age, there is no interaction effect between these variables. When comparing the mean values (see table 14), the values of the rational message appeal are higher than the values of the emotional message appeal. This indicates that regardless of the endorser type and endorser age, the rational message appeal leads to higher scores on the dependent measurement.

Older				Younger				
	Expert		Non-expert		Expert		Non-expert	
Construct	Rational	Emotional	Rational	Emotional	Rational	Emotional	Rational	Emotional
	M (SD)							
Message Credibility	2.966 (.150)	1.713 (.135)	2.902 (.122)	1.469 (.156)	2.917 (.153)	1.520 (.139)	2.604 (.143)	1.740 (.143)
Ad Attitude	2.060 (.137)	1.653 (.123)	2.153 (.111)	1.537 (.142)	2.063 (.139)	1.493 (.126)	2.047 (.130)	1.688 (.130)
Product Attitude	2.819 (.154)	2.063 (.138)	2.778 (.125)	1.741 (.159)	2.839 (.156)	1.941 (.142)	2.680 (.146)	2.008 (.146)
Purchase Intention	2.195 (.137)	1.602 (.123)	1.970 (.111)	1.469 (.142)	2.024 (.140)	1.451 (.127)	1.906 (.131)	1.458 (.131)
WOM Intention	2.293 (.133)	1.500 (.120)	2.403 (.108)	1.454 (.138)	2.152 (.136)	1.478 (.123)	2.133 (.127)	1.414 (.127)

Table 14. Descriptive statistics of the interaction effect between message appeal, endorser type, endorser age

Values on a 5-point Likert scale. 1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree

5. Discussion, Implications, and Future Research Directions

5.1 Discussion of Results

This study examined the effects of message appeal, endorser type, and endorser age on message credibility, ad attitude, product attitude, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth intention in advertising for a technical product. The results of this study confirmed a main effect of message appeal on all five dependent variables. A rational message led to significantly different results than an emotional message. This study proved that a rational message appeal leads to higher message credibility, ad attitude, product attitude, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth intention than an emotional message appeal when advertising a technical product. Therefore, hypotheses 1 (a-e) were supported. Those findings can be explained by the fact that the rational appeal contains product information which persuades consumers more than an emotional appeal which does not present product information. It is said that consumers' intention to buy a product is higher, when they are not scared to 'make a wrong choice based on the lack of knowledge [about the product features]' (Fennis & Stroebe, p. 257). Thus, whenever sufficient knowledge is build due to sufficient information, consumers can evaluate their knowledge and decide to purchase the product. The higher mean scores, when using a rational appeal, can be explained by the fact that, especially for a technical product, information about the features of the product are relevant for consumers, because only then an evaluation of the product is possible.

Contrary to research expectations, this study did not find a significant difference between using an expert and a non-expert endorser in a smartphone advertisement regarding the message credibility, ad attitude, product attitude, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth intention. This means that hypotheses 2 (a-e) were rejected. Although, the participants recognized the difference in the level of expertise of the types of endorsers, there was no effect on the dependent variables. An explanation for this can be that there is no need to ask an expert for advice about a smartphone, because 78% of the Germans (destatis.com, 2017) own a smartphone themselves. Therefore, it is possible that most consumers are familiar and experienced with smartphones, they already built knowledge about smartphones. This assumption is supported by the high product knowledge of the participants of this study. A smartphone is often a product that is used every day. After a while, expectations about a product category are formed by consumers (Sujan, 1985). The more often a consumer uses a product of a certain category, the more experienced and knowledgeable he or she gets. This influences the evaluation processes leading to an attitude (Sujan, 1985). Furthermore, the participants of this study were 18- to 28-years old. Because of their age, they are digital natives. Their knowledge about new technical products is high, because they were the first generation to grow up with such innovations

(Prensky, 2001). Therefore, a smartphone is most likely a technical product which requires no expert advice or recommendation, especially for the age group of 18- to 28- year-olds.

Additionally, the effects of endorser age on the dependent variables were examined in this study. Researching the effects of endorser age in advertising was a relatively uncharted aspect in advertising literature, especially in relation to advertising for technical products. In this study, no significant difference between using an older endorser in comparison with a younger endorser was found. Therefore, hypotheses 3 (a-e) were rejected. The age difference was recognized by the participants, however, there was no effect on the dependent variables. The findings of this study agree with earlier research (Klock & Traylor, 1983; Milliman & Erffmeyer, 1990), which state that there is no difference in the effect of an older or younger endorser. A possible explanation for this is that in this case the younger endorser was a digital native himself regarding his age. In case he was expected to be experienced with smartphones because of his age, it explains why the younger endorser did not differ from the older endorser in influencing the dependent variables. This proposition is supported by research stating that age alone is not a sufficient reason for younger people to obey and respect older people, but expertise and rationality are the new antecedents for respecting and trusting other people (Kim & Hoppe-Graff, 2001). However, in the mean scores, a slight tendency of higher scores for the older endorser could be seen. Focusing on this, it is possible that older endorsers still lead to more favorable and persuasive results in advertising. This finding would agree with the findings of Bristol (1996) stating that age is linked to expertise and knowledge, which means that an older endorser is perceived as more knowledgeable.

Furthermore, the absence of certain effects in this study might be due to the sensibility of the dependent variables. The dependent variables are linked to each other in the sense that, for instance, a positive product attitude and a higher purchase intention might interrelate. If a consumer thinks negatively about a product and its features, he or she would never intend to buy the product. Additionally, if a consumer thinks that the message in the ad is not credible, the ad attitude might be more negative, too. The same goes for the word-of-mouth intention. A consumer that is not satisfied with the product, or who would not intend to buy the product, has probably no reason to tell others about the product. This explains why there is either an effect on all five dependent variables, or there is no effect on any of them. However, the circumstance that these variables might interrelate, is because they all are part of advertising. As mentioned earlier, the dependent variables in this study illustrate the aims of advertising.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

The main purpose of this study was to explore the effects of different advertising appeals on the perception of consumers toward an advertisement in the context of technical products. To create a credible message, to achieve a positive attitude toward the ad, toward the product, and to generate purchase intention, as well as word-of-mouth intention is essential for advertisers when advertising a product of a certain product category.

This study contributes to the field of advertising literature by examining advertising appeals in the context of technical products. Although, the findings of this study did not suggest distinct differences on the effects of endorser type and endorser age, it still developed insights into the effects of message appeal. It is an interesting conclusion that the rational message appeal is more effective in influencing all five dependent variables. These findings seem to be in line with previous examination of numerous researchers. Therefore, this study adds additional support for the theory that a rational appeal is more persuasive than an emotional appeal. Researchers can use this knowledge to further analyze the persuasiveness of message framing. It can be examined whether the results of this study are still true if the context changes. Researchers can identify whether endorser type and endorser age are still not showing significant differences when the context is changing. By context, the demographics of the participants can be meant, or the product category that was used in this study.

5.3 Practical Implications

The findings of this study can be used as directions for advertisers who are designing an advertisement for a technical product. The aim of this study was to deliver scientifically proven insights on how to reach consumers in a poster ad. A practical implication for advertisers is that a rational message is essential when addressing consumers. Facts and technical information about the product are needed for consumers to evaluate the product. Moreover, a message concerning a technical product that is intended to be perceived as credible, needs to be rational. A subjective statement of an endorser is not the right choice when promoting a technical product. Furthermore, the choice of a younger or older endorser, as well as an expert or non-expert endorser, may not be essential when reaching customers. Advertisers do not need to spend a lot of money on endorsement marketing. For advertisers, it is most important to choose the right framing of the message, instead of focusing on the characteristics of the endorser of the message. As long as the message is rational, the advertisers can choose whether the endorser is younger or older, or an expert or non-expert.

5.4 Limitations and Future research direction

Although this research delivers significant insights into the field of advertising, some limitations are worth mentioning. At first, the structure of the dependent variables needs to be considered. It is possible that the dependent variables were interrelating, because there was either an effect on all five of the dependent variables, or there was no effect on any of them. For future research, it could be helpful to investigate the dependent variables separately. For instance, the focus can lie on only ad attitude when examining the effects of the independent variables. Moreover, the structure of the dependent variables can be improved by checking whether the constructs are loading with each other, and if so, changing the items so that the constructs are not loading with each other.

Another aspect worth mentioning is, whether the right variables were manipulated. There seemed to be no effect of the endorser age on the dependent variables. However, it is possible that the gender of the endorser might influence the dependent variables of this study. It would be interesting to investigate, whether a male endorser is leading to higher perceived credibility or to a higher purchase intention than a female endorser.

Furthermore, to increase the theoretical value of examining endorser age, future research is recommended to use another context, thus product category. For technical products it might not be influential whether the endorser is younger or older, but for other products an influence of the endorser age might occur. Additionally, in future research, it could be tested whether the results of this study are still true if the endorser is older than, for instance, 70 years. It would be interesting to investigate whether the experience of a senior endorser would lead to higher scores in the dependent variables.

Lastly, to further examine the use of the rational appeal, future research could be directed at measuring under which conditions the rational appeal is more effective than the emotional appeal. It would be valuable to find out whether message framing depends on certain circumstances, such as product category, target audience, or aim of an ad. It even would be interesting to see whether the most efficient way to advertise a product consists of a combination of both the rational and emotional appeal.

6. Conclusion

The right way to address consumers through advertising is essential when promoting a product. To deliver further insights into the most effective way of advertising, this research was conducted. The findings of this study suggest that presenting an advertisement for a smartphone, containing a rational message is effective. Advertisers should choose a rational message rather than an emotional message, when aiming at creating a credible message. Facts and information are perceived as more credible in comparison with a subjective statement. Additionally, the attitude toward the ad and toward the product are more favorable when the message is rational. Finally, the purchase intention and the word-of-mouth intention are significantly higher when a rational message was used. When comparing an expert endorser and a non-expert endorser, as well as a younger and an older endorser, no significant differences were found. The research question of this study can be answered by stating that a rational message appeal has more positive effects on consumers' perception of a technical product and its advertisement.

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II. Appendix A – Material Preliminary Tests

First Preliminary Test: Technical Product

Wie ordnest Du die technischen Eigenschaften der folgenden Produkte auf einer Skala von 1 bis 7 (1 = keine technischen Eigenschaften, 7 = sehr technische Eigenschaften) ein? Beachte bei Deiner Einschätzung die vorher angegebenen Informationen über technische und nicht technische Produkteigenschaften.

	Nicht technisch					Technisch	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Drucker	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Kaffeemaschine	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
Action Kamera (z.B. GoPro)	0	0	0	\odot	\odot	\odot	
Netbook	\bigcirc	\odot	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
eBook (z.B. Kindle)	٢	٢	٢		0	۲	0
Lautsprecher	0	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
Navigationsgerät	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Smartphone	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
Kopfhörer (z.B. Beats)	0	\odot	0	0	\odot	\odot	
Staubsauger	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc

Second Preliminary Test: Expert Profession

Wen würdest du in Bezug auf Smartphones und anhand der Berufsbezeichnung am ehesten als Experten bezeichnen?

Erstelle ein Ranking der aufgelisteten Berufe. Platziere die Berufsbezeichnung, die du am ehesten als Experten bezeichnen würdest, an erster Stelle und die Berufsbezeichnung, die du am wenigsten als Experten bezeichnen würdest, an letzter Stelle.

Klicke die einzelnen Berufe an und ziehe sie an die entsprechende Stelle, um das Ranking zu erstellen.

•	Software Entwickler	1
•	IT Support Service Mitarbeiter	2
•	Handyhersteller	3
•	Marktforscher (Bereich Konsumgüter)	4
•	Verkaufsberater in einem Handyshop	5
•	IT Systemelektroniker	6
•	Kaufmann für Telekommunikation	7
•	Fachberater in einem Elektronik-Fachmarkt	8

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III. Appendix B – Manipulation Material

Rational-Expert-Older



Rational - Expert - Younger



Emotional-Expert-Older



Emotional-Expert-Younger



Rational - Non-expert - Older



Rational - Non-expert - Younger



Emotional – Non-expert – Older



Emotional-Non-expert-Younger



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IV. Appendix C – Survey Items

Demographics

Wie alt bist du? Welches Geschlecht hast du? Was ist dein höchster, bisher erreichter Bildungsstand?

Product Knowledge

Ich verwende regelmäßig ein Smartphone.

Wenn ich ein Smartphone kaufe, weiß ich nicht, welche Ausstattung ein hochwertiges Smartphone haben sollte.

Ich bin dazu in der Lage, die Qualität eines Smartphones zu beurteilen.

Ich denke, dass ich ausreichend Wissen über die technische Ausstattung eines Smartphones habe, um eine gute Kaufentscheidung zu fällen.

Manipulation Check

Message Appeal

Die Aussage in der Werbung enthält Fakten.

Die Aussage in der Werbung enthält objektive Informationen über das Produkt.

Die Aussage in der Werbung enthält die Gefühle der abgebildeten Person.

Die Aussage in der Werbung enthält eine persönliche Meinung der abgebildeten Person.

Endorser Type

Die Person in der Werbung ist qualifiziert um Angaben zu dem Produkt zu machen. Die Person in der Werbung ist ein Fachmann in Bezug auf die Produktkategorie (Smartphones). Die Person in der Werbung ist erfahren in Bezug auf Smartphones.

Die Person, die du in der Werbung gesehen hast, ist...? (a) Softwareentwickler bei CTE Neo Plus (b) Kunde bei CTE Neo Plus (c) Ich weiß es nicht.

Endorser Age Wie alt schätzt du die Person in der Werbung ein? (a) 20-30 (b) 45-60

Message Credibility

Die Werbung wirkt überzeugend auf mich. (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989) Die Werbung wirkt glaubwürdig. (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989) Die Werbung scheint vertrauenswürdig zu sein. (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989) Meiner Meinung nach ist die Werbung nicht überzeugend. (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989)

Attitude toward Ad

Meiner Meinung nach ist die Werbung interessant. (Spears & Singh, 2004) Ich finde die Werbung ansprechend. (Spears & Singh, 2004) Ich finde die Werbung einladend. (Spears & Singh, 2004) Die Werbung wirkt auf mich nicht einnehmend. (Spears & Singh, 2004) Die Werbung wirkt auf mich angenehm. (Spears & Singh, 2004)

Attitude toward Product

Das Smartphone ist interessant. (Spears & Singh, 2004) Das Smartphone wirkt auf mich ansprechend. (Spears & Singh, 2004) Das Smartphone entspricht meinen Anforderungen. (Spears & Singh, 2004) Das Smartphone ist belanglos für mich. (Spears & Singh, 2004) Das Smartphone weckt meine Neugier. (Spears & Singh, 2004)

Purchase Intention

Ich wäre geneigt, das Smartphone zu kaufen. (Rizwan, Qayyum, Qadeer & Javed, 2014) Meine Absicht, das Smartphone zu kaufen, ist hoch. (Rizwan, Qayyum, Qadeer & Javed, 2014) Ich erwäge nicht, das Smartphone zu kaufen.

Beim nächsten Kauf eines Smartphones würde ich dieses Smartphone in Betracht ziehen. (Jaafar, Lalp & Naba, 2012)

WOM Intention

Ich würde das Smartphone meinen Freunden empfehlen. (Brown, Barry, Dacin & Gunst, 2005) Ich würde das Smartphone jemandem empfehlen, der mich um Rat fragt. (Brown, Barry, Dacin & Gunst, 2005)

Ich würde positiv über das Smartphone sprechen. (Brown, Barry, Dacin & Gunst, 2005) Ich würde Freunden von diesem Smartphone abraten.

Ich würde Freunde dazu anregen, dieses Smartphone zu kaufen. (Brown, Barry, Dacin & Gunst, 2005)