

Chapter 4: Credibility

Key Terms and Concepts

charisma	secondary dimensions of credibility
ethos	dynamism or extroversion
Q-score	composure
celebritocracy	sociability
third-person effect	credibility as a peripheral or heuristic cue
brand equity	credibility and involvement
match-up hypothesis	prior identification of source expertise
meaning transfer perspective	sleeper effect
celebrity endorsers	discounting cue
source credibility	disassociation
receiver-based construct	absolute versus relative sleeper effect
multidimensional construct	image management
situational or contextual phenomenon	image restoration
dynamic nature of credibility	Impression Management Theory
factor-analytic studies of credibility	facework
primary dimensions of credibility	accounts
expertise (a.k.a. competence)	likeability or L-factor
halo effect	powerless style of communication
trustworthiness (a.k.a. character)	halo effect (Box 4.2)
goodwill (e.g. perceived caring)	

Chapter Summary Notes

- I. Ethos or credibility is a key ingredient in persuasion.
- A. Advertisers frequently rely on celebrity endorsers to boost their company's image.
 - B. A Q-score is a measure of an endorsers selling power
 - C. The third-person effect refers to people's tendency to think they are less persuadable than others
 - D. An effective endorser will increase brand equity, or the value attached to the brand.
 - E. The match-up hypothesis proposes that a celebrity "fit" the brand she/he endorses.
 - F. The meaning transfer perspective supports the match-up hypothesis on the grounds that the celebrity endorser projects his/her public persona onto the brand, thus creating identification with consumers.
 - G. If a celebrity endorser becomes embroiled in a scandal, the sponsor's image may suffer as well.
- II. Credibility can be defined as "judgments made by a perceiver concerning the believability of a communicator" (O'Keefe, 1990). This is extended to include institutions as well.
- A. Credibility is a receiver-based phenomenon. It exists in the eye of the beholder.
 - B. Credibility is a multidimensional construct; credibility isn't one thing, it is a composite of several different factors.
 - C. Credibility is situational or contextual. Communicator credibility may vary from one situation to the next.
 - D. Credibility is dynamic. It can change over time, even during a single persuasive message

- III. Factor analytic studies have identified several underlying dimensions of credibility.
- A. Primary dimensions of credibility are nearly universal.
 - 1) Expertise (competence, qualification) is one of the primary dimensions of credibility. Of the three primary dimensions, expertise usually plays the most important role.
 - 2) Trustworthiness (character) is one of the primary dimensions of credibility.
 - 3) Goodwill (perceived caring) is one of the primary dimensions of credibility.
 - B. Secondary dimensions of credibility tend to be more situation-specific.
 - 1) Dynamism or extroversion refers to the energy level or enthusiasm of a source.
 - 2) Composure refers to how calm, cool, and collected a source is.
 - 3) Sociability refers to how likeable, friendly, and good natured a source is.
 - C. Empirical research suggests these underlying dimensions are highly applicable to real-life settings.
- IV. Credibility tends to function as a peripheral or heuristic cue in persuasion.
- A. Receivers with low involvement are more likely to rely on credibility.
 - B. Receivers with high involvement are less likely to rely on credibility, and more likely to scrutinize message content.
- V. To maximize credibility's effectiveness, a source's qualifications must be identified prior to a persuasive message.
- VI. The "sleeper effect" refers to a situation in which a message attributed to a lower credibility source becomes more persuasive over time compared to a message attributed to a high credibility source.
- A. A discounting cue has the potential to prevent message effectiveness.
 - B. The sleeper effect operates through a process of disassociation, whereby a message becomes separated from its source in the minds of receivers.
 - C. Although it has been empirically documented in laboratory settings, it is difficult to produce an absolute sleeper effect in real-world settings.
 - D. Studies have found a relative sleeper effect in which both messages have lost favor over time, but the high credibility message has lost far more favor than the low-credibility message.
- VII. The concept of credibility can be extended to organizations and institutions as well.
- A. Institutions carry out public relations campaigns to manage their public image.
 - B. Departments, divisions, and staffs have been assigned the duty of maintaining an organization's credibility.
 - C. Corporations and other institutions whose images have been tarnished by scandal or adverse circumstances, must engage in image restoration strategies.
- VIII. In interpersonal settings, the concept of credibility can be likened to Impression Management Theory and facework.
- A. Impression Management Theory explains how a person tries to project a positive self-image to others.
 - B. In attempting to project a favorable image, individuals persuade others to see them a certain way while they are simultaneously vulnerable to influence attempts by others.
 - C. Facework involves negotiating one's social standing and social worth in the eyes of others.
 - D. Impression management and facework are inherently persuasive inasmuch as they entail goal-directed communication.
- IX. Ten guidelines are offered in order to enhance one's credibility as a persuader.
- A. Be well-prepared and well-organized.
 - B. Cite evidence for your position, and cite the sources for your evidence.
 - C. Explain your background and qualifications to your listeners prior to presenting a message.
 - D. Establish trustworthiness by demonstrating that you have your listeners' interests at heart.
 - E. Display goodwill (perceived caring) toward your audience.
 - F. Improve your likeability, or your L-factor, by conveying warmth and immediacy.
 - G. Adopt a language style suitable to your audience and the occasion.
 - H. Avoid a powerless style of communication: "ums" and "uhs," tag questions, qualifiers, and hesitations.
 - I. Create identification by emphasizing your similarities with your listeners.

- J. Increase receiver involvement in order to counter perceptions of low credibility.
- K. Secure the endorsement of a high-credibility source.

X. (Box 4.2) The halo effect occurs when individuals regard the attractiveness and articulate manner of others as signs of credibility.

- A. Ted Bundy did not fit the stereotypical image of a serial killer.
- B. Being aware of the credibility trap of the way someone talks, the way they dress, or whom they know may prevent one from stumbling into danger.