Ad Skepticism: How Does Its Interaction with Ad-Related Factors Affect Persuasion?
Role of Celebrity Endorser and Argument Quality[1]

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Abstract

The effectiveness of the messages sent to consumers via advertisements depends on their persuasibility. The main research questions of the current study, handled within the theoretical framework of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), are about the factors determining the level of persuasion through ads and are threefold; whether advertising skepticism affects advertising effectiveness; the possible effect of interaction between ad skepticism and argument quality and the interaction between ad skepticism and celebrity endorser on advertising effectiveness dimensions. Hypotheses were tested using a between-subjects experimental design model with 2 (argument quality: strong vs. weak) * 2 (endorser: celebrity vs non-celebrity) manipulations among undergraduate students who studied in social sciences

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departments and who had taken the main marketing course(s) using convenience sampling method. The results of the MANOVA analyses revealed the main effect of ad skepticism on the advertising effectiveness dimensions; the effect of ad skepticism * argument quality interaction on ad attitude and brand attitude for highly skeptic consumers; and the effect of ad skepticism * celebrity endorser interaction with consumers of low levels of skepticism on ad credibility, ad attitude and brand attitude. Moreover, the findings supported the role of ad skepticism as an elaboration factor. The paper contributes to persuasion literature by testing the effect of advertising skepticism together with its interaction with celebrity endorser and argument quality on advertising effectiveness. Moreover, it verifies the role of ad skepticism as an elaboration factor in ELM.

Keywords: Ad Skepticism, Elaboration Likelihood Model, Advertising Effectiveness, Celebrity Endorsement, Argument Quality

Reklama Yönelik Şüphe: Reklamla İlişkili Faktörlerle Şüphe Etkileşimi İknayı Nasıl Etkiler?
Ünlü Kullanımı ve İddia Gücünün Rolü[4]

Öz

Tüketicilere reklamlar aracılığıyla iletilen mesajların etkili olması bu mesajların ikna ediciliğine bağlıdır. Ayrıntılandırma Olasılığı Modeli (AOM) çerçevesinde ele alınan bu çalışmanın temel araştırma soruları reklamlar vasıtasıyla gerçekleşen ikna düzeyini belirleyen etkenlerle ilgilidir ve üç boyutta oluşturulmuştur: reklama yönelik şüphenin reklam etkililiği üzerindeki etkisi ile reklama yönelik şüphenin reklamda ünlü kullanımı ve reklamda kullanılan iddiaların gücüyle olası etkileşiminin reklam etkililiği boyutları üzerindeki etkisi. 2 (iddia gücü: güçlü veya zayıf) * 2 (ünlü kullanımı: var veya yok) manipülasyonlu denekler arası faktöriyel tasarım modeli kullanılarak sosyal bilimler

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[4]   Makale, birinci yazarın doktora tezinden üretilmiştir.

bölümlerinde okuyan ve temel pazarlama ders(ler)ini almış öğrenciler arasında kolayda örnekleme yöntemi ile test edilen hipotezler reklama yönelik şüphenin reklam etkililiği boyutları üzerinde; reklama yönelik şüphe ve iddia gücü etkileşiminin şüphe düzeyi yüksek tüketiciler için reklama yönelik tutum ve markaya yönelik tutum üzerinde; reklama yönelik şüphe ve reklamda ünlü kullanımı etkileşiminin ise şüphe düzeyi düşük tüketiciler için reklamın inanılırlığı, reklama yönelik tutum ve markaya yönelik tutum üzerinde etkili olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Bulgular ayrıca reklama yönelik şüphenin ayrıntılandırma düzeyini etkileyen bir faktör olduğu ortaya koymuştur. Çalışma, reklama yönelik şüphenin ünlü kullanımı ve iddia gücü ile etkileşiminin reklam etkililiği boyutları üzerindeki etkisini test ederek ikna literatürüne katkıda bulunmakta, reklama yönelik şüphenin AOM kapsamında bir ayrıntılandırma faktörü olarak rolünü kanıtlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Reklama Yönelik Şüphe, Ayrıntılandırma Olasılığı Modeli, Reklam Etkililiği, Ünlü Kullanımı, İddia Gücü

Introduction

Consumers are exposed to numerous advertising messages from various channels, and the effectiveness of these messages is becoming more complicated due to their simultaneous conveyance. The effectiveness of advertising messages depends on the content, source characteristics, receiver characteristics and media characteristics of the message. However, the ability of advertisements to change consumer attitudes depends on their cogency. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how source, receiver, content and media characteristics shape advertising effectiveness. As the receiver of advertising messages, consumer characteristics determine whether messages are received as intended by the advertisers. Thus, a detailed analysis of them is crucial to convey persuading messages and to obtain the intended results.

Ad skepticism is one of the consumer factors affecting persuasion process. Ad skepticism is referred as "the tendency toward disbelief of advertising claims" from the advertising perspective (Obermiller and

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Spangenberg, 1998). As it is an important component of the persuasion process and provides insights into the marketing process, unearthing its effects on different outcomes is crucial for both academics and practitioners.

Skepticism is strongly associated with cognitive information processing. Consumers with high levels of skepticism towards advertising are more inclined to question the messages that are presented to them. Therefore, in order to reinforce the persuasion process, the message should embody elements such as strong arguments or quality of consumer reviews filling the gaps that usually occur after this questioning process (Escalas and Luce, 2004; Gotlieb, 2006; Chou, Lien and Liang, 2011, Xiao and Li, 2019). On the other hand, consumers with low levels of skepticism towards advertising tend to use peripheral cues to evaluate the messages. Thus, through the use of celebrities, presenting a large number of arguments or using other consumers' experiences would be an effective mechanism through which to persuade them (Sanbonmatsu and Kardes, 1988; Swinyard, 1993; Zhang and Buda, 1999; Lee, 2009; Yang and Hsu, 2017).

Academic literature provides various studies on advertising skepticism which analyze the issue with relevance to different factors such as personality (Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998; Mohr, Eroglu and Ellen, 1998; Thakor and Goneau-Lessard, 2009; Matthes and Wonneberger, 2014), consumption-related issues (Boush, Friestad and Rose, 1994; Obermiller and Spangenberg, 2000; Elpeze-Ergeç, 2004) and ad-related aspects (Ford, Smith and Swasy, 1990; Kerkhof, Fennis and van der Meijden, 2004; Pan, Meng and Lee, 2017; Yang and Hsu, 2017). However, this topic still needs further detailing. On these grounds, two main research questions were developed researching whether ad skepticism determines advertising effectiveness and whether advertising elements chosen (argument quality and celebrity endorser) with regards to individuals' skepticism levels cause advertisements to be more effective.

As an additional contribution, this study extends the literature's knowledge by researching the issue within the theoretical framework of

the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), the persuasion model developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1981). ELM suggests that individuals process information either through central or peripheral routes, and the route taken depends on the motivation and ability of the message receiver. Therefore, it is essential to construct message content that is suitable for the processing route of the receiver. Various research listed involvement (Swasy and Munch, 1985; Homer and Kahle, 1990; Liu and Shrum, 2009), need for cognition (Zhang and Buda, 1999; Bradley and Meeds, 2004; Lin, Lee and Horng, 2011), relevance (Bordia et al., 2005) and trust (Kim, Kim and Park, 2010) as factors determining elaboration levels. Skepticism is considered as a central route factor affecting the elaboration level of consumers as skeptic individuals tend to process messages cognitively. Hence, in addition to providing novel findings on the effect of ad skepticism on advertising effectiveness, the study is expected to contribute to the ELM literature by proposing another factor determining elaboration route.

Theoretical Background

Advertising Skepticism

Measuring the attitudes and feelings of consumers towards products, markets, marketing efforts and firms has always been an intriguing research area. Consumer attitudes towards advertising and evaluating the determinants of these attitudes are, therefore, necessary to effectively use advertising, a major tool in persuading consumers. Ad skepticism is a determinant of consumer attitudes towards the ads presented to them in various media as it affects the persuasiveness of messages and the pursuing consumer behavior. The more skeptic consumers are, the higher their inclination to criticize the information presented in the ads. Thus, ad skepticism is an important construct to consider while measuring consumer attitudes.

Skepticism is defined as "an attitude of doubt or a disposition to incredulity either in general or toward a particular object" (Merriam-Webster, 2019), whereas ad skepticism is the tendency to disbelieve adver-

tising claims (Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998). In their pioneering study, Barksdale and Darden (1972) included questions on advertising in their consumer research and found that consumers considered most of the ads to be unbelievable and were of the opinion that they misrepresent product quality and performance and so did not present a true picture of the advertised products. In a later study by Calfee and Ringold (1994), 70% of consumers regarded advertisements to be untruthful.

Although advertisements is as an important source of information (Coulter, Zaltman and Coulter, 2001; Romani, 2006), consumers some-times develop a feeling of skepticism which arises from the content of the ad, the motives of the advertisers, the value of the information pre-sented to oneself or to society and the appropriateness of advertising for certain audience groups (Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998). Having a distinct stance from general skepticism and ad attitude, ad skepticism is divided into two constructs: general disbelief towards ads and disbelief towards a specific ad (Ford, Smith and Swasy, 1990; Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998; Forehand and Grier, 2003).

The academic literature on the factors affecting advertising skepti-cism provides a limited number of studies. Kerkhof, Fennis and van der Meijden, (2004) grouped these factors into three categories: personality-, ad- and advertiser-related factors. The topic has also been studied within different contexts, such as skepticism towards green advertising (Finis-terra do Paço and Reis, 2012; Matthes and Wonneberger, 2014), skepti-cism towards cause-related marketing (Singh, Kristensen and Villasenor, 2009; Kim, Kim and Kim, 2019), and skepticism towards health-related ads (Diehl, Mueller and Terlutter, 2008; Park, Ju and Kim, 2014; Huh, Delorme and Reid, 2016)

In the nomological network developed by Obermiller and Spangen-berg (1998), it is proposed that individuals with high levels of skepticism are less likely to pay attention to ads or develop consistent beliefs with the claims in the ads, and are more likely to develop the opposite views of the ad source. Therefore, they are unpersuaded by the ads, are affected less by the messages presented and rely less on ads for product infor-

mation. The authors also suggest that ad skepticism shapes the effects of the persuasion tools used in ads. Thus, individuals with high levels of skepticism are more susceptible to elaborated messages and do not consider peripheral cues. Thanks to their rich cognitive structures, highly skeptical consumers are more aware of the strategies used in the ads and are less affected by the peripheral cues.

One of the main purposes of advertisements is to persuade consumers to buy the advertised product, and for this purpose, the ads must be acknowledged as true and believed by the audience. Skepticism plays a critical role in the social analysis of ads as it is a major determinant of consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions. Consequently, understanding consumers' skepticism levels is of vital importance in the domain, as is determining the antecedents and consequences of skepticism, with the hope that ads will persuade consumers.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

ELM is among the most popular dual-process persuasion theories in social psychology. The fundamental characteristic of dual-process theories developed in the late 1980s is to divide social judgments and cognitive processes into two: those being operated automatically or in a controlled manner (Gawronski and Creighton, 2012). Automated processes embrace rapid, effective and uncontrolled processing, whereas the controlled process is slower, requires more effort and depends on rules. Dual-process theories have attempted to reveal the interaction between these two sides of cognitive processes in forming behaviors. ELM deals with the effect of different features on persuasion. It is a theory about the underlying processes in judgments, the variables affecting these judgments and the strengths that arise as a result of these processes (Petty and Wegener, 1999).

ELM has dual routes, namely *central* and *peripheral* routes, which refer to different levels of information processing activity. Attitude changes on the central route are based on the knowledge of the object or subject of an attitude. The receiver scrutinizes, analyses and evaluates

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the arguments in the message and develops a consistent and reasoned position regarding the message. The process is not necessarily objective and/or rational. The critical issue in the central route is that the elaboration process involves detailed thinking. On the other hand, a change in attitude through the peripheral route occurs as a result of associating the attitude's object or issue with positive or negative cues; the inferences of the receiver, source characteristics or even a smell associated with the attitude object. Difference between the central and peripheral routes arises from diligently scrutinizing the information on the attitude object.

Numerous studies have covered the agents acting in the persuasion process of ELM, some of which are argument quality (Miniard, Bhatla and Rose, 1990; Gammoh, Voss and Chakraborty, 2006; Hur, Kim, Karatepe and Lee, 2017), source credibility (Chebat, Filiatrault and Perrien, 1990; Christensen, Ascione and Bagozzi, 1997; Kim, Chung, Lee and Preis, 2016), positive peripheral cues (Kirby et al., 1998) and mood (Swinyard, 1993; Workman, 2008).

In addition to motivation and ability, there are a number of factors that moderate the effect of appeals such as involvement (Chun and Lee, 2016), elaboration motivation (Kidwell and Jewell, 2010) and ability (Jae and Delvecchio, 2004), need for cognition level (Brinol, Petty and Tormala, 2004), physiological arousal (Sanbonmatsu and Kardes, 1988) and trust (Kim, Kim and Park, 2010).

Being an extensively used model in attitude change, ELM literature will be enriched with additional factors that affect elaboration route. Therefore, researching ad skepticism within this framework would contribute to ELM literature.

Hypotheses

Skepticism towards advertising affects the behavioral intentions of consumers in different ways (Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998). Consumers with high skepticism levels are more prone to comprehensively evaluating and considering complex claims, whereas consumers with

low skepticism levels are more susceptible to the peripheral cues of the ads, such as using celebrity endorsements or a message slogan. This tendency overlaps with the principles of ELM. Within the framework of this model, current study is founded on the assumption that the skepticism levels of consumers towards the ads determine which route will be used in the persuasion process. The effect of ad skepticism on advertising effectiveness should be considered in addition to formulating effective and persuasive ad messages.

Although the concept of ad skepticism has simultaneously arisen with the widespread use of advertisements, the number of studies on this topic has only recently increased (Amxy and Lumpkin, 2016; Raziq et al., 2018; Kang, 2020). Therefore, it is considered essential to analyze the effect of ad skepticism in attitudes under different conditions. Thus, the first hypothesis of the research was formulated as follows:

H_1: Ad skepticism positively affects ad credibility, ad attitude, brand attitude and behavioral intentions of consumers.

Most of the persuasion theories in the attitude change literature suggest that there are two main routes to persuasion despite the different concepts and methods they emphasize (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). The first one is the *central route to persuasion*. This approach incorporates exerting cognitive effort, paying attention to the information presented in the ads and cognitively processing the messages in the ads. Accordingly, attitude change arises as a result of detailed thinking on the information presented. If the arguments are considered to be strong and persuasive, attitude change will occur in the way the advertiser desired. However, if the arguments are considered weak, then the receiver will resist the message content and may even develop negative attitudes (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). Ad skepticism is assumed to be an individual factor that differs attitudes towards the ads. Consumers with high skepticism levels will elaborate the message content in more detail and, argument quality, as a central route element, will be more effective on the advertising effectiveness variables. Although argument quality is a popularly tested condition in ELM (Areni, 2003; Chu and Kamal, 2008; Dong, 2015;

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Lopes, Dens, De Pelsmacker and De Keyzer, 2020), there is not any research that uses it together with ad skepticism to the best of the authors' knowledge. Within this context, the hypothesis on the relationship between skepticism and argument quality is formulated as follows:

H_2: There is a significant interaction between ad skepticism and argument quality on ad credibility, ad attitude, brand attitude and behavioral intentions. For consumers with high ad skepticism, argument strength positively affects ad credibility, ad attitude, brand attitude and behavioral intentions, whereas using strong or weak arguments does not result in any significant difference in terms of ad credibility, ad attitude, brand attitude and behavioral intentions for consumers with low ad skepticism.

The second category of message processing is the *peripheral route*. Receivers may not always be willing or have the ability to process message content; in other words, their elaboration levels may be low. However, the receiver may still be persuaded and so his attitudes will change. Attitude change through the peripheral route occurs not because of the processing of positive and negative aspects of the message but owing to associating the subject or the object of persuasion with basic cues. The person may accept a message without detailed thinking only because it is presented in a pleasant lunch or because the message source is an expert. Similarly, if the message receiver has low elaboration levels or there are numerous arguments in the message, together with the receiver having a "the more, the better" heuristic, it is possible to talk about attitude change through the peripheral route. Similarly, an unattractive source may result in rejection of the message content. In peripheral route message processing, attitude change is short-term but effective. It is assumed that the skepticism levels of individuals may influence their willingness to process messages. Consumers with low skepticism levels may not elaborate on the content of messages and, therefore, a peripheral route aspect, such as using a celebrity endorser, may be more effective on advertising effectiveness variables (Rowley, Gilman and Sherman, 2018; Kang, 2020; Rollins et al., 2021). As a result, the hypothesis on the

interaction between ad skepticism and using celebrity endorsers in the ads was developed as follows:

H₃: There is a significant interaction between ad skepticism and using celebrity endorsers on ad credibility, ad attitude, brand attitude and behavioral intentions. For consumers with low ad skepticism, using celebrity endorsers positively affects ad credibility, ad attitude, brand attitude and behavioral intentions, but it does not result in any significant difference in terms of ad credibility, ad attitude, brand attitude and behavioral intentions for consumers with high ad skepticism.

Method

Subjects, Design and Procedure

In order to test the aforementioned hypotheses, a between-subjects factorial design model was developed with 2 (argument quality: strong vs. weak) x 2 (endorser: celebrity vs. non-celebrity) manipulations, in which ad skepticism is the independent variable. The effect of the differences between the two groups (high vs. low-skeptics), was measured on the research outcomes and depended on the use of a celebrity endorser or the argument quality.

In order to ensure sample homogeneity, the research was conducted with undergraduate students who studied in social sciences departments and who had taken the main marketing course(s). Convenience sampling method was employed. The study was conducted with a total of 492 participants in small groups of 5 to 20. The students signed onto the study using a list that mentioned different dates and times they could participate. On the study day, they were welcomed to the class and were asked to complete the survey after looking at the ad poster. The study continued for a two-week period and each participant was given course credit. The allocation of participants to each experimental group was above the minimum level of 20 (Hair et al., 1998) (Table 1).

Table 1. Between Groups Distribution Of Students Participating
The Research

		Argument quality	
		Strong argument	Weak argument
Using celebrity endorser	Celebrity	121 students	124 students
	Non-celebrity	124 students	123 students

Experimental Stimulus Development

Pre-test 1

The product to be displayed in the ads should either be used or known by all students. Thanks to its widespread usage and knowledge, mobile phone was chosen as the display object and a hypothetical brand name was used to prevent any participant prejudice. The brand name was chosen from the study of Martin et al. (2003), in which the authors developed hypothetical brand names through various tests. Among the brand names of Tectron TZ, Samsonic SX and Norden NT; Tectron TZ was chosen as it does not have any phonetical associations with current mobile phone brands that were available in study country.

Pre-test 2

In selecting the celebrity endorser, it is considered more necessary to have credibility rather than being likable, favorable, attractive and so forth when the issue is debated from the perspective of consumer skepticism. Credibility affects many factors such as ad attitude, product attitude and purchase intentions (Tripp, Jensen and Carlson, 1994) and is an important antecedent to evaluate the ad and the product positively.

In deciding the celebrity, a pre-test was conducted among the students to determine whom they considered to be credible. With this purpose, the students were first asked to list the first five celebrities that

they considered to be credible with free association. From the answers of 64 students who participated in the study, a pool of 142 celebrities was obtained. From this list, eight celebrities that were mentioned by at least five students were included in the Celebrity Credibility Index (2011) and a new pool of 15 celebrities was obtained.

In the second stage, the students were required to rate the first five celebrities from the list, which was prepared in alphabetical order, giving 5 points to the celebrity that they considered to be the most credible. The result of this evaluation, in which 59 students participated, gave a celebrity that was mentioned by 48 students within the top-five list; this celebrity was chosen as the endorser to be used in the research. In the ad poster with non-celebrity endorser, university students were used so that the students would identify with themselves. Due to the product type, and to avoid creating any gender effects, a photograph displaying both a male and a female student was used in the poster.

Pre-test 3

Argument quality, which is defined as the structure of an opinion arising from arguments, can affect attitudes both positively and negatively. Whereas "logical, defendable and compelling" strong arguments positively affect attitudes, "doubted and refutable" weak arguments cause negative attitudes (Petty, Cacioppo and Heesacker, 1981).

In order to determine the weak and strong arguments that will be used in the poster, 67 students were asked to list the five most important features that they consider when choosing a mobile phone, with the exception of the price. From this open-ended question, 54 different features were obtained. In the second phase, among these 54 features, the most and least common ones were taken and a pool of 12 features was obtained. Later, 20 students were asked to rate these features using the 7-point semantic differential scale of 6 items developed by Martin et al. (2003). After evaluating the findings, the 4 features with the highest mean values were taken as strong arguments, whereas the 4 features with the lowest mean values were taken as weak arguments.

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Within the scope of the study, 4 printed ad posters, which were designed and printed by a professional graphic designer, were prepared using the celebrity endorser (celebrity and non-celebrity) and arguments (strong and weak) determined with the pre-tests.

Data Collection Tools

The survey used in the study included questions on unearthing the effect of ad skepticism on the dimensions of advertising effectiveness and the role of a number of factors in this process. Ad skepticism was analyzed using two dimensions in 5-point Likert-type scales: dispositional skepticism measured with 9 items (Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998) and situational skepticism measured with 3 items (Kerkhof, Fennis and van der Meijden, 2004). Ad credibility, ad attitude, brand attitude and behavioral intention were taken as dependent variables and were measured with the scales developed by Darley and Smith (1993). In addition to these, questions to test the manipulation of argument quality (Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann, 1983), celebrity endorser usage (Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann, 1983), and source credibility (Ohanian, 1990) were used. The scales were translated into Turkish and tested with a small sample for wording and understanding by the authors separately.

Results

Manipulation Checks

Participants were asked a series of questions to test whether the manipulations made in the printed ads with regards to using a celebrity/non-celebrity endorser and using strong/weak arguments were perceived by them as expected. Before proceeding to the manipulation checks, participants were grouped according to their skepticism levels as high vs. low skeptics. With this purpose, a new variable was established from the dispositional and situational skepticism variables and as the mean and median values were very close (mean=3.21; median=3.25), the median split procedure was applied following previous studies (Batra and Stayman, 1990; Martin, Lang and Wong, 2003). The split resulted in 209 high-skeptic and 283 low-skeptic participants.

In order to check argument quality manipulation, the two questions developed by Petty et al. (1983) were directed to the participants. For the first question asking the participants to evaluate the persuasiveness of the ad (1=unpersuasive, 7=persuasive), the two groups did not differ in their mean values ($M_{strongargument}$=3.51; $M_{weakargument}$=3.59; p=0.623). With regards to the second question, where the participants rated arguments on strength (1=weak argument; 7=strong argument), the mean values significantly differed ($M_{strongargument}$=3.38; $M_{weakargument}$=3.03; p=0.024), which resulted in the partial fulfilment of argument quality manipulation.

For the celebrity endorser manipulation, two questions from Petty et al. (1983) were used. Participants were first asked whether they recognized the people in the ad. When the celebrity was used, all of the participants indicated "yes" (n=245); when a non-celebrity was used, all of the participants replied negatively (n=247). Moreover, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they liked the endorser in the ad (1=liked very little; 7=liked very much), and the results revealed that celebrity endorser was liked more than non-celebrity endorser ($M_{celebrity}$=6.05; $M_{non-celebrity}$=2.97; p=0.000).

During the manipulation checks, group mean values were compared according to endorser credibility, which was measured by five questions (Ohanian, 1990). A comparison of the mean values indicated that participants rated celebrity endorsers as more credible than non-celebrity endorsers ($M_{celebrity}$=5.50; $M_{non-celebrity}$=2.72; p=0.000), and the findings indicated that the celebrity endorser was manipulated as intended.

Assumption Testing

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis developed in the study. Before proceeding to the assumptions checked through various tests, primary controls in data were made. Missing values were recoded with mean values; dependent variables were measured in metric form and independent variables were coded in categorical forms; the number of observations in each group was close to each other (Hair et al., 1998). Observation independence was ensured by recording the participant list to ensure that each participant could take

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place in the study only once. As MANOVA is highly sensitive to outliers (Hair et al., 1998), box plot and Mahalanobis D^2 were used consecutively to determine the outliers, which resulted in the elimination of eighty variables from the dataset; reducing to 412 observations. With regards to normal distribution assumption, each dependent variable was tested individually with skewness and kurtosis statistics, and the transformations suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) were performed. Assumption of normality was verified for all dependent variables, except for behavioral intention where the transformations resulted in more deviation from the normal distribution. Therefore, no transformations were made for this variable, which should be considered during further analysis. Homoscedasticity assumption was verified with a non-significant Box's M value (Box's M=58.19, p=0.883). In order to test linearity among dependent variables, a correlation analysis was performed and the results suggested a linear relationship between dependent variables.

Hypothesis Testing

Before proceeding hypothesis testing, the scales used in the study were tested for their reliability and validity. Cronbach's alpha was used for reliability, eliminating the variables that have item-total correlation below 0.50 and inter-item correlation below 0.30. The analysis resulted in satisfactory values for all the scales (dispositional ad skepticism= 0.819; situational ad skepticism=0.815; ad credibility=0.866; ad attitude=0.710; brand attitude=0.911 and behavioral intention=0.914). For the validity test, explanatory factor analysis was used with principal component analysis and items whose communality was below 0.5 were excluded from the analysis. The explained variances of all the scales were satisfactory (dispositional ad skepticism: 64%, situational ad skepticism: 84%, ad credibility: 89%, ad attitude: 59%, brand attitude: 76% and behavioral intention: 90%).

Hypothesis 1: Main Effect of Ad Skepticism

The first hypothesis of the study concerns the effect of ad skepticism on ad credibility, ad attitude, brand attitude and behavioral intentions;

advertising effectiveness in total. It is assumed that the positive effect of ad skepticism on ad effectiveness will be higher for consumers with low ad skepticism levels. MANOVA results indicated a significant, positive main effect of ad skepticism on one of the dependent variables, F (4, 403) = 23,70; p<.05; Wilk's Λ=.810; partial η^2=.19 which was further tested with tests of between-subjects effects, indicating the positive and significant effect of ad skepticism on all ad effectiveness dimensions (p<.05). A further pairwise comparison between high- and low-skeptic individuals on advertisements indicated the significant main effect of ad skepticism for ad credibility, ad attitude, brand attitude and behavioral intention in favor of low-skeptic individuals (p<.05). Hence, the findings supported the first hypothesis of the study (Table 2).

Table 2. Tests of between-subjects effects of ad skepticism

Dependent variable		F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Intercept	Ad Credibility	5547,805	,000	,932	1,000
	Ad Attitude	4387,025	,000	,915	1,000
	Brand Attitude	5088,868	,000	,926	1,000
	Behavioral Intention	1348,321	,000	,769	1,000
Ad Skepticism	Ad Credibility	67,348	**,000**	,142	1,000
	Ad Attitude	26,807	**,000**	,062	,999
	Brand Attitude	32,294	**,000**	,074	1,000
	Behavioral Intention	16,208	**,000**	,038	,980

Hypothesis 2: Interaction of Ad Skepticism and Argument Quality

The second hypothesis suggests the significant interaction of ad skepticism and argument quality on advertising effectiveness dimensions for consumers with high ad skepticism values, whereas consumers with low ad skepticism values will not be affected from this interaction. MANOVA results indicated the significant effect of ad skepticism and argument quality interaction on advertising effectiveness, F (8, 806) = 2,85; p<.05;

Wilk's Λ=.946; partial η^2 = .02. However, a partial eta-squared value of this interaction was calculated to be lower than the partial eta-squared value of the main effect of ad skepticism, which indicates a lower effect of interaction on advertising effectiveness dimensions than the main effect of ad skepticism. With regards to each dependent variable, the results indicated the significant effect of ad skepticism * argument quality interaction on ad attitude and brand attitude ($p<.05$), whereas the interaction did not have any significant effects on ad credibility and behavioral intention (Table 3).

Table 3. Tests of between-subjects effects of ad skepticism * argument quality interaction

Dependent variable		F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Ad skepticism * Argument quality	Ad Credibility	2,657	,071	,013	,527
	Ad Attitude	4,558	**,011**	,022	,773
	Brand Attitude	6,873	**,001**	,033	,921
	Behavioral Intention	,711	,492	,003	,170

Hypothesis 3: Interaction of Ad Skepticism and Celebrity Endorser

The third hypothesis of the study assumes significant effect of using celebrity endorser in advertising on advertising effectiveness dimensions for individuals with low ad skepticism, whereas it states that it will not have any significant effects on high-skeptic individuals. MANOVA findings of this analysis demonstrated the significant effect of ad skepticism and celebrity endorser interaction on advertising effectiveness, $F(8, 806) = 4,57$; $p<.05$; Wilk's Λ=.915; partial η^2 = .04. However, partial eta-squared value of this interaction was calculated to be lower than the partial eta-squared value of ad skepticism's main effect, which indicates a lower effect of interaction on the advertising effectiveness dimensions than the main effect of ad skepticism. With regards to the effect of this interaction on each dependent variable, the results indicate the significant effect of ad skepticism * celebrity endorser interaction on all depen-

dent variables, except for behavioral intention (p<.05). Using celebrity endorser in advertising significantly affects ad credibility, ad attitude and brand attitude of individuals with low ad skepticism, which indicates support for H3 (Table 4).

Table 4. Test of between-subjects effects of ad skepticism*celebrity endorser interaction

	Dependent Variable	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Ad Skepticism*Celebrity Endorser	Ad Credibility	10,348	**,000**	,049	,987
	Ad Attitude	7,770	**,000**	,037	,950
	Brand Attitude	6,410	**,002**	,031	,902
	Behavioral Intention	2,761	,064	,013	,543

Discussion

The findings of the study offer significant contributions both to the newly-developing literature of ad skepticism and to the persuasion process, especially to ELM. Previous studies have provided findings verifying the role of consumer characteristics that shape the effectiveness of persuasive messages, such as need for cognition, self-esteem, involvement, intelligence and gender (Kulkarni, Kalro and Sharma, 2020; Lu, Wu and Hsiao, 2019; Luo and Ye, 2019). This study tests the effect of ad skepticism as another consumer characteristic that affects persuasion process. Various researches since the 1930s have investigated consumers' attitudes towards advertising and their subsequent behavioral intentions; and they have revealed that most consumers do not trust advertising (Calfee and Ringold, 1994). The current study enhances this knowledge as the results have revealed the role of ad skepticism as a determinant of advertising effectiveness. It is crucial to consider the ad skepticism levels of the target audience when preparing persuasive content in advertisements. Accounting for the effect of ad skepticism on advertising effectiveness dimensions among young consumers is a major contribution of this study. Hence, the current findings suggest that advertisers should

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consider consumers' ad skepticism levels when preparing persuasive content and using content that concentrates on feelings of trust to create a more effective advertisement.

The second contribution of this study is considered with respect to the ELM, a dual-process persuasion theory. The model suggests that individuals with high elaboration likelihood are more inclined to use the central route in message processing, whereas those with low-elaboration likelihood will use the peripheral route in shaping their attitudes. Previous studies have revealed that factors such as involvement, need for cognition and argument quality determine which route will be taken by the individual (McAlister and Bargh, 2016; Lin, Tseng, Wang and Liu, 2018; Xu and Huang, 2019). The current study provided findings consistent with the ELM and adds to this knowledge by suggesting that ad skepticism will act as one of the consumer characteristics that affect the route taken in message processing, revealing that consumers with high skepticism will be more likely to analyze message content in detail, while consumers with low skepticism will form their attitudes using the heuristic cues in the ads. In line with the assumptions of the ELM, it is assumed that consumers with high-ad skepticism will be affected by the argument quality in the ads, whereas consumers with low-ad skepticism will be affected by the celebrity endorser used. The findings of the study partially supported the hypothesis on the interaction of argument quality * ad skepticism, as the relationship was found to be effective only on ad attitude and brand attitude. With regards to the celebrity endorser * ad skepticism interaction, the relationship was found to be effective on all dimensions of advertising effectiveness, except for behavioral intention, supporting the assumptions of the study based on the ELM principles, which presume that consumers with low ad skepticism will use peripheral cues, such as celebrity endorser, in message processing.

Previous studies in the literature have analyzed the effect of personality variables and consumption experiences on ad skepticism; despite this, the interaction effect of ad-related factors with ad skepticism has been subject to a limited number of studies. Therefore, the role of the

argument quality * ad skepticism and celebrity endorser * ad skepticism interactions will serve as important insights in preparing ad contents.

In addition to the aforementioned academic contributions of the study, it provides valuable insights for practitioners, the foremost of which is verifying ad skepticism and its effect on consumer behavior. It has revealed that consumer skepticism towards ads should be considered when preparing any kind of promotion effort. Especially with experience goods, consumers tend to evaluate advertising cues depending on their skepticism levels. Thus, persuasive content should target this characteristic of consumers. Furthermore, revealing the cues that practitioners should use according to consumer skepticism levels is another contribution of the study. For consumers with high skepticism levels, central route cues such as argument quality, including opposing views and the identification of the content with the brand should be used. On the other hand, for consumers with low ad skepticism, peripheral cues such as celebrity endorser, the number of arguments included and ad colors should be used.

The study is subject to some limitations besides its academic and managerial contributions. It is conducted with young consumers, specifically university students, using convenience sampling which limits the generalizability of the findings to all consumer groups. Thus, repeating the study with different consumer groups will enable its findings to be generalized. Additionally, the product chosen for the advertisement in the study included only an experience good. From this perspective, testing ad skepticism levels of consumers for search and credence goods, as well as services, would enable a more comprehensive comparison of consumer attitudes and would provide significant data for the promotion efforts for those product types. Repeating the study with different elaboration cues will also offer valuable contributions.

Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Beyanı

Bu makalenin araştırma ve rapor süreci bilimsel araştırma ve yayın etiği kurallarına uygun şekilde gerçekleştirilmiştir.

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Destek Beyanı

Bu araştırma herhangi bir kurum ya da kuruluş tarafından desteklenmemiştir.

Çıkar Beyanı

Bu araştırma herhangi bir çıkar çatışmasına konu değildir.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Reklama Yönelik Şüphe: Reklamla İlişkili Faktörlerle Şüphe Etkileşimi İknayı Nasıl Etkiler?
Ünlü Kullanımı ve İddia Gücünün Rolü

Tüketiciler her gün farklı kanallar aracılığıyla kendilerine yöneltilen sayısız reklam mesajına maruz kalmaktadırlar. Çeşitli amaçlarla oluşturulan bu mesajların etkili olabilmesi, özellikle pek çok bilgi iletiminin eş anlı olarak sürdürüldüğü modern dünyada giderek zorlaşmaktadır. İletilen mesajın içeriğinden, mesajın alıcısının sahip olduğu özelliklerden, mesajı ileten kaynağın özelliklerinden veya mesajın sunulduğu ortamın özelliklerinden kaynaklanan çeşitli faktörler reklam etkililiğinde belirleyici rol oynamaktadır.

Tüketici araştırmalarının önemli çalışma konularından biri haline gelen ikna kavramı temellerinin şekillendirildiği sosyal psikoloji disiplininin yanı sıra pazarlama disiplininde de önemli bir araştırma alanıdır. Tüketicilerin tutumlarının değiştirilmesinde en önemli araçlardan biri olan reklamların etkili olabilmesi, tüketicileri ikna etmesine bağlıdır. Alıcının kişilik özellikleri, mesajın alıcıya doğru şekilde ulaşmasının belirleyicisidir. Bu nedenle tüketicilerin özelliklerinin titizlikle ele alınıp değerlendirilmesi önemlidir.

İkna sürecinde etkili olan tüketici özelliklerinden biri de şüphe kavramıdır. Şüphe, genel olarak veya belirli bir nesneye karşı sahip olunan kuşku veya inanmazlık eğilimi ve bu konunun geçerliliğini sağlamak için mantık ve eleştirel düşünmeyi kullanmak olarak tanımlanabilir. Reklamın ikna gücü açısından ele alındığında ise, reklama yönelik şüphe reklamda yer alan iddialara yönelik olarak genel inanmama eğilimidir. Tüketicilerin reklama yönelik şüphe duyguları reklam aracılığıyla tüketicilerle iletişim kurmak ve onları etkilemek için büyük yatırımlar yapan pazarlamacılar için oldukça önemlidir.

Reklama yönelik şüphe düzeyi tüketicilerin reklam bilgisini işlemelerinde ve bunun sonucu olarak da reklamın etkililiği üzerinde rol oynayan bir faktördür. Şüphe düzeyi yüksek olan bireyler, kendilerine sunulan mesajları bilişsel olarak işlemektedirler. Sorgulama ve eleştiri içeren bu sürecin sonunda tutumları şekillenen bu bireyleri ikna etmek için, bilişsel sorgulamaları sonucunda oluşacak boşlukları doldurmaya yönelik ögelerin mesajda yer alması daha etkili sonuçlar ortaya koyacaktır. Reklama yönelik şüphe için de benzer bir durum söz konusudur. Tüketicileri ikna edecek mesajlarda bilişsel süzgeçten geçirilerek etki edecek güçlü iddialar, istatistikler gibi ögelerin bulunması mesajın

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ikna gücünü arttıracaktır. Reklama yönelik şüphe düzeyi düşük olan tüketiciler
ise, kendilerine sunulan bilgileri kabul etmeye daha fazla eğilimlidirler. Bu ne-
denle, onları ikna edecek reklam mesajlarında ünlü kullanımı, çok fazla sayıda
iddiaya yer verme veya yaşanmış olayları kullanma etkili olacaktır. Bu açıdan,
reklama yönelik şüphenin reklam etkililiğini şekillendiren faktörlerden biri ola-
bileceğini söylemek mümkündür.

Şüphe düzeyinin reklam etkililiği üzerindeki etkisinin araştırılmasında çeşitli
yaklaşımlardan faydalanmak mümkündür. Bunlardan biri olan Ayrıntılandırma
Olasılığı Modeli (AOM) mesaj işlemede merkezi yol ve çevresel yol olmak
üzere iki ana yol olduğunu, mesajın alıcısının motivasyon ve yeteneğine bağlı
olarak bu yollardan birinin kullanıldığını ve ikna mesajının etkili olabilmesi
için alıcının kullandığı yola uygun mesaj içeriklerinin kullanılması gerektiğini
ileri sürmektedir.

Reklama yönelik şüphenin de, ayrıntılandırma düzeyini etkileyen bir faktör ol-
duğu düşünülmektedir. Ancak bu konuda sınırlı sayıda araştırma yapılmıştır.
Reklama yönelik şüphe düzeyi yüksek olan bireylerin ayrıntılandırma düzeyi-
nin yüksek olacağı ve bu nedenle kendilerine iletilen mesajlarla ilgili kararla-
rı merkezi ikna yolunu kullanarak verecekleri; reklama yönelik şüphe düzeyi
düşük olan bireylerin ise çevresel ikna yolunu kullanarak mesajları işleyeceği
varsayılmaktadır. Bu nedenle, merkezi ikna yolunda etkili olan öğeler şüphe
düzeyi yüksek olan tüketicilerin tutumlarını olumlu yönde etkilerken, çevresel
yola ait ögeler de şüphe düzeyi düşük olan tüketicilerin tutumlarını daha olum-
lu etkileyecektir. Genel olarak ele alındığında reklama yönelik şüphe düzeyi
yüksek olan bireylerin reklam etkililiği ortalamalarının, reklama yönelik şüphe
düzeyi düşük olan bireylerden daha düşük olacağı; ancak şüphe düzeyi yüksek
olan bireyleri etkilemek için merkezi ikna yolu araçlarından faydalanılması du-
rumunda bu kişilerin tutumlarının olumlu yönde şekilleneceği, benzer şekilde
şüphe düzeyi düşük olan tüketiciler için de çevresel ikna yolu araçlarının olum-
lu tutumlara neden olacağı düşünülmektedir.

Yukarıda açıklanan koşullar ve varsayımlar doğrultusunda araştırmanın iki
temel problemini şu şekilde ifade etmek mümkündür: "Tüketicilerin reklama
yönelik şüphe düzeyleri reklamın etkili olması üzerinde belirleyici bir etken
midir? Reklama yönelik şüphe düzeyinin yüksek veya düşük olmasına bağlı
olarak kullanılacak reklam ögeleri reklamı daha etkili hale getirir mi?".

Araştırmanın amacı ise, sınırlı sayıda araştırmanın konusu olan reklama yöne-
lik şüphe düzeyinin reklam etkililiğini oluşturan boyutlar üzerindeki etkisini

ortaya koymak ve tüketicinin reklama yönelik şüphe düzeyinin yüksek veya düşük olmasına bağlı olarak hangi reklam öğelerinin daha etkili olacağını belirlemektir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, tüketiciler reklama yönelik şüphe düzeyi düşük olanlar ve yüksek olanlar olmak üzere gruplandırılmış ve şüphe düzeyi yüksek olan grupta güçlü iddiaların, düşük olan grupta ise ünlü kullanımının reklam etkililiğini nasıl etkilediği incelenmiştir. Bu doğrultuda araştırmanın hipotezleri aşağıdaki gibi oluşturulmuştur:

H₁: Reklama yönelik şüphe düzeyinin reklamın inanılırlığı, reklama yönelik tutum, markaya yönelik tutum ve davranışsal niyetler üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisi vardır.

H₂: Şüphe düzeyi ile iddia gücü arasında, reklamın inanılırlığı, reklama yönelik tutum, markaya yönelik tutum ve davranışsal niyetler üzerinde anlamlı etkiye sahip bir etkileşim vardır. Şüphe düzeyi yüksek olan kişilerde reklamda yer alan iddianın gücü reklamın inanılırlığı, reklama yönelik tutum, markaya yönelik tutum ve davranışsal niyetler üzerinde daha olumlu etkiye sahipken; şüphe düzeyi düşük olan kişilerde reklamın inanılırlığı, reklama yönelik tutum, markaya yönelik tutum ve davranışsal niyetler açısından güçlü veya zayıf iddia kullanımı anlamlı bir farklılık yaratmaz.

H₃: Şüphe düzeyi ile ünlü kullanımı arasında, reklamın inanılırlığı, reklama yönelik tutum, markaya yönelik tutum ve davranışsal niyetler üzerinde anlamlı etkiye sahip bir etkileşim vardır. Şüphe düzeyi düşük olan kişilerde, reklamda ünlü kullanımı reklamın inanılırlığı, reklama yönelik tutum, markaya yönelik tutum ve davranışsal niyetler üzerinde daha olumlu etkiye sahipken; şüphe düzeyi yüksek olan kişilerde reklamın inanılırlığı, reklama yönelik tutum, markaya yönelik tutum ve davranışsal niyetler açısından ünlü kullanımı anlamlı bir farklılık yaratmaz.

Oluşturulan hipotezleri test etmek amacıyla, 2 (iddia gücü: güçlü veya zayıf) * 2 (ünlü kullanımı: var veya yok) manipülasyonlu, reklama yönelik şüphenin bağımsız değişken olarak kullanıldığı bir denekler arası faktöriyel tasarım modeli oluşturulmuştur. Araştırmada kullanılacak olan basılı reklam afişlerinin hazırlanmasında 3 ön testten faydalanılmış; reklam afişlerinde kullanılacak ürün, ünlü ve iddialar yapılan ön testlerle belirlenmiştir. Örneklem homojenliği sağlaması açısından öğrenciler arasında yapılan çalışmada kolayda örnekleme yönteminden faydalanılmış; öğrencilerin seçiminde, temel pazarlama dersi(leri)ni almış olmaları şeklinde bir kısıt belirlenmiştir.

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Ad Skepticism: How Does Its Interaction with Ad-Related Factors Affect
Persuasion? Role of Celebrity Endorser and Argument Quality

Verilerin test edilmesinde kullanılan MANOVA analizi sonucunda reklama yö-
nelik şüphenin reklam etkililiğini belirlediği ve bu nedenle reklam etkililiği ile
ilgili çalışmalarda dikkate alınması gereken bir boyut olduğu; reklama yönelik
şüphe ile iddia gücü etkileşiminin sadece reklama ve markaya yönelik tutumlar
üzerinde ve hipotezde varsayıldığı şekilde şüphe düzeyi yüksek olan denekler
için etkili olduğu; reklama yönelik şüphe ile ünlü kullanımı etkileşiminin ise
reklamın inanılırlığı, reklama yönelik tutum ve markaya yönelik tutum üze-
rinde ve beklenen şekilde şüphe düzeyi düşük olan denekler için etkili olduğu
sonucu elde edilmiştir.

Çalışma, şüphe kavramının incelenmesi ve etkileşimlerine yönelik bulguların
ortaya konulmasının yanı sıra, Ayrıntılandırma Olasılığı Modeli çerçevesinde
incelenerek açıklanması açısından da literatüre önemli bir katkıda bulunmakta-
dır. Özellikle şüphe çalışmalarının sınırlı sayıda olduğu göz önüne alındığında,
çalışmanın hem akademisyenler hem de uygulamacılar için önemi yadsınama-
yacaktır.