

Research Article

# Who said what: The effects of cultural mindsets on perceptions of endorser–message relatedness ☆

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## Abstract

The cultural lens through which an ad is viewed can affect the extent to which an endorser of the product in an ad and the message s(he) communicates are thought about in relation to one another. Consumers with a collectivist mindset tend to think about information relationally. Consequently, they consider the endorsement in relation to the endorser and this affects their memory for both. It also affects recipients' concern with the fit between the endorser's message and the endorser and consequently influences their judgments of both the ad and the product being advertised. When people have an individualist mindset, on the other hand, they appear to treat the endorser and the endorsement as independent pieces of information and are less sensitive to their fit. Four studies support these conclusions and provide insights into how endorser–message relatedness impacts persuasion under different cultural mindset conditions.

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## Introduction

Consumers are often exposed to endorsements of a product by celebrities and well-known public figures (Shimp, 2000). Sometimes these endorsers can be other consumers like themselves. Although the use of endorsers in mainstream advertising is commonplace, the construction of persuasive messages that are effective across cultures has proved to be inordinately difficult. Companies have often failed to understand

fully what resonates with foreign audiences. The cultural lens through which consumers view an ad often influences their attention to different aspects of the ad and the interpretation they give to it. This can occur because the information that they have accessible and consequently bring to bear on their judgments of the ad and the product being advertised might be culturally determined (for a review, see Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). More relevant to the current discussion, however, is the possibility that cultural frames affect how people process information and their sensitivity to the way in which different elements in a persuasive communication go together.

Although it is often not explicitly recognized, advertisements can be very complex communications. An ad can be composed of many diverse features, which include not only a picture of the product but also a description of its attributes, its price and brand name, a testimonial or endorsement by a celebrity or another consumer, and a picture of the endorser. Consumers who are confronted with such an ad might use several different strategies in construing its implications. On one hand, they could focus their attention on a small subset of the features available, evaluate the

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implications of each piece of information *independently*, and then combine these implications mechanistically to form a judgment in the manner implied by theories of information integration (Anderson, 1971; Fishbein, 1963; for applications in consumer research, see Adaval, 2001, 2003; Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994). Alternatively, they could consider the features of the ad *interdependently*. That is, they might consider the features in relation to one another and their situational or informational context and attempt to form an overall impression of the product that incorporates their implications as a whole (Adaval & Wyer, 1998; Adaval, Isbell, & Wyer, 2007). Cultural differences might affect the disposition to employ these different processing strategies and consequently the extent to which a particular ad component is deemed important and how the different components go together. The influence of cultural differences on how various components of an ad fit or go together has rarely, if ever, been considered.

Theories of cultural cognition (Chiu & Hong, 2007; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Nisbett, 2003; Oyserman & Lee, 2008b) postulate how cultural differences in (a) the value placed on fitting in with social institutions and (b) the value attached to individual striving affect the disposition to think about stimulus features independently or in relation to one another. Oyserman (2011) (see also Oyserman & Lee, 2008a) suggests that these dispositions (called cultural mindsets) can spill over from human relationships to affect cognitive processes more generally (Mourey, Oyserman, & Yoon, 2013). Moreover, these different dispositions, which characterize individualist and collectivist cultures, can be situationally primed. (This can be done using a variety of methods such as reading a paragraph or clicking on first person pronouns in a paragraph, Oyserman, Sorensen, Reber, & Chen, 2009.) When these cultural mindsets are primed, participants who have received an individualist prime are better at extracting the main point of a message whereas those who have received a collectivist prime are better at connecting and integrating across message elements (Oyserman & Lee, 2008a).

These differences could potentially have implications for many of the specific issues noted earlier, concerning the way in which the different types of information contained in an ad are combined to form a judgment. In the present research, we focused on a particular issue that has rarely been examined either in consumer research or in communication and persuasion more generally: namely, the relationship of information contained in an endorsement to characteristics of the endorser him(her)self. We predicted that culture-related dispositions to process information can induce more general differences in the tendency to consider the endorser in an ad in relation to the message content. This differential sensitivity to the fit between the endorser and the message can influence participants' interpretation of the message and their judgments of both the ad and the product being advertised.

## Theoretical background

### Cultural mindsets

One of the most pervasive cultural differences to be identified in cross-cultural research surrounds the tendency to think about features of a stimulus situation independently or in relation to

one another (for reviews, see Kitayama & Cohen, 2007; Wyer, Chiu, & Hong, 2009). This difference is reflected in individuals' self-construals (Gardner, Gabriel, & Lee, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; see also Triandis, 1995). That is, Westerners typically have a disposition to think of themselves independently of others, whereas East Asians are disposed to think of themselves in relation to others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989, 1995). Although this difference may be rooted in early childhood socialization (Miller, Fung, & Koven, 2007), it generalizes to the processing of information in nonsocial domains as well.

A more general conceptualization of these cultural differences and their effects was proposed by Oyserman and Lee (2008a,b) and Oyserman and Sorensen (2009). They postulate the existence of cultural mindsets analogous to those that influence behavior in other types of domains (for reviews, see Wyer & Xu, 2010; Wyer, Xu, & Shen, 2012). More generally, a behavioral mindset is characterized by a tendency for general behavior-related concepts, activated in one domain of experience, to guide behavior in an unrelated domain to which these concepts are applicable (Wyer & Xu, 2010). Moreover, the behavior-related concepts that give rise to these mindsets can be either situationally induced or chronically accessible.

The cultural mindsets postulated by Oyserman and her colleagues are exemplars. As noted earlier, members of East Asian cultures are characterized by a disposition to think about themselves in relation to others and to the group in which they belong. This disposition can give rise to a chronic *collectivist* mindset that leads individuals to process pieces of information in relation to one another in quite different situations. In contrast, representatives of Western cultures are characterized by independence, individualism and personal autonomy. These can give rise to a chronic *individualist* mindset that leads individuals to process pieces of information independently of one another more generally. Thus, for example, East Asians are more likely than Westerners to think of features of information in relation to their context (Park, Nisbett, & Hedden, 1999; Krishna, Zhou, & Zhang, 2008; see also Masuda & Nisbett, 2001 and Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001) and to organize information in terms of their thematic relationship rather than in terms of abstract categories (Ji, Zhang, & Nisbett, 2004).

As Oyserman and Lee (2008a) and Oyserman and Sorensen (2009) point out, however, mindsets are not only chronic but can be induced by transitory situational factors. For example, individuals can be primed to have an individualist mindset by asking them to construct sentences that require the use of first-person singular pronouns (such as "I" and "me"). Alternately, they can be primed to have a collectivist mindset by asking them to construct sentences containing first-person plurals (e.g., "we", "us"). Although these concepts are associated with social interaction, they may activate more general dispositional concepts that govern information processing in other, unrelated domains. Thus, for example, priming a collectivist mindset increases individuals' ability to remember the positions of objects in a picture in relation to one another and to think about an array of small letters in relation to a more global figure that they compose (Kuhnen & Oyserman, 2002). These effects parallel those observed more generally in Western and

East Asian individuals. Such primes can also affect the extent to which people see bundled offerings (e.g., a cellphone and a case) as bound together. Thus, inducing a collectivist mindset can lead persons to refuse to buy one option in a bundle when the other is not available (Mourey et al., 2013).

This and other research (for a review, see Briley, Wyer, & Li, 2014) suggest that the effects of chronically activated and situationally induced cultural mindsets have parallel effects on information processing. We therefore assumed that inducing these mindsets in the laboratory would provide a more general insight into chronic cultural differences in the processing of persuasive messages.

#### *Processing of persuasive messages*

Advertising typically consists of several components including the product, the advertising message, and the message source (the endorser, the sponsoring company, etc.). When an advertisement contains a testimonial or endorsement by another person (e.g., a celebrity or another consumer), recipients could potentially focus their attention on the relation between (a) the endorser and the product, (b) the endorser and themselves, or (c) the endorser and the message.

Advertising research, for example, has evaluated the first relationship (i.e., the fit between the endorser and the type of product advertised) and shown that the greater the fit or congruency between the endorser and the product, the more favorable the evaluations (Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Koernig & Boyd, 2009; Stafford, Stafford, & Day, 2002). Thus, for instance, an athlete who endorses a sports-related brand can lead to more favorable attitudes toward both the endorser and the ad and can increase purchase intentions whereas a concert pianist who endorses the product is less likely to have these effects. The second relationship has been examined in a stream of research focused on the similarity of the endorser to the recipient (Brock, 1965; Leavitt & Kaigler-Evans, 1975; Wagner, 1984; Woodside & Davenport, 1974). This research has yielded mixed findings with source similarity having a positive effect in some cases and no effect in other cases.

The third relationship (i.e., the impact of the source of a communication on its persuasiveness and the processes that underlie this impact) has been the subject of social psychological research for decades (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955; Kelman, 1958) and has been extensively reviewed by Briñol and Petty (2009). Much of this work has implicitly or explicitly treated the source of a message as an independent piece of information that becomes dissociated from the message over time (Kelman & Hovland, 1953). Research by Chaiken (1980) and Chaiken and Maheswaran (1994) also assumes that the message's source is used as a heuristic basis for judgment independently of the message content and has focused on characteristics of the source (attractiveness, expertise, bias, etc.) that influence the relationship between the source and the object or issue being evaluated (Briñol, Petty, & Tormala, 2004; Cialdini, 1993; Gottlieb & Sarel, 1991; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Maddux & Rogers, 1980; McGinnies & Ward, 1980; Tormala, Briñol, & Petty, 2007; Ziegler, 2010). In some research, however,

the endorser and the message are seen as related and characteristics of the endorser can affect how the message is interpreted (see Birnbaum & Stegner, 1979).

General differences in the disposition to think about pieces of information in relation to one another could have an impact on any or all of the aforementioned relations. In the present research, we restricted our attention to factors that lead advertisement recipients to attend to this latter relationship. We suggest that certain factors (such as the cultural lens from which a message is viewed) can lead people to think of the message either independently of the endorser or in relation to it.

#### *The effect of cultural orientations on perceived fit*

Relatively little research has been conducted on how cultural dispositions affect message persuasiveness. Some work, however, is indicative of the fact that differences in cultural orientations might influence the degree to which participants respond to the fit between two external entities. Research by Monga and John (2007), for instance, suggests that people from Eastern cultures (e.g., Indians) are likely to perceive poor-fitting brand extensions of a known brand (e.g., a cabinet made by Kodak) more favorably than Western (e.g., US) consumers do if they had been primed to process information in a holistic manner. In other work, Ahluwalia (2008) suggests that people are likely to see a greater fit between a brand and its extensions if they have an interdependent self-construal (characteristic of East Asian cultures) than if they have an independent self-construal. Moreover, they are relatively better able to hunt for and perceive relationships in the former case.

Other cultural research has focused on the fit between respondents' own cultural orientation and the message content they are presented with. Han and Shavitt (1994) showed that collectivists (Koreans) responded more favorably to ads that depicted collectivist concerns. In contrast, individualists (Americans) were more likely to prefer ads that focused on individualist concerns. In a similar vein, Uskul and Oyserman (2010) found that tailoring a message frame to fit the cultural frame was likely to lead to greater persuasion because such matches increased the fluency with which the information was processed (Schwarz, Sanna, Skurmik, & Yoon, 2007; Song & Schwarz, 2008). Tailoring messages to fit the motivational orientations of different groups of recipients can have similar effects (Uskul, Sherman, & Fitzgibbon, 2009).

In all of these cases, the fit between the cultural frame and the message was created by altering the message content to reflect concerns of each culture. However, cultural mindsets can also influence perceptions of the fit between elements of the ad more generally. In the current context, we focused on perceived fit between the endorser and the specific message communicated by the endorser. Based on past research, an individualist mindset should lead people to think of the message and the endorser as independent pieces of information and, therefore, they should be relatively insensitive to whether they fit or not. In contrast, we expected that a collectivist mindset would lead persons to think about different components of the ad in relation to one another and therefore they



would be more likely to notice the fit between the message and the endorser. If this is so, individuals with a collective mindset should have better memory for what endorsers say about the products they endorse. This leads to our first hypothesis:

**H1.** Participants with a collective mindset will have better memory for the link between the endorser and the content of the endorser's message than will participants with an individualist mindset.

Support for H1 should provide evidence that people with a collectivist mindset think about the source in relation to the message. However, this would not necessarily indicate *how* they think about the relationship. The word "fit" is inherently ambiguous and fit could be perceived based on a number of criteria. For example, the endorser's words might be considered inappropriate. Or, the endorser's expressions or mannerisms might not fit what the endorser is saying. Cesario, Higgins, and Scholer (2008), for instance, showed that when the nonverbal cues of a source matched the motivational orientation of the recipients, the message was more persuasive. Thus, perceptions of fit can arise from not only what the source or endorser says but also their non-verbal cues.

In the current context, we suggest that participants with a collectivist mindset are more likely to think about the message in relation to the source (i.e., the endorser) and consequently are more likely to notice the fit between the two than participants with an individualist mindset. Thus, they may respond more favorably to the ad when the fit is good but less favorably when the fit is poor. In contrast, individualists will be relatively insensitive to issues of fit. Given this difference, we expect that the impact of fit between the endorser and the message will be greater when a collectivist mindset is primed than when an individualist mindset is primed. This leads to our second hypothesis:

**H2.** The effect of message–endorser fit will be greater when a collectivist mindset is primed than when an individualist mindset is primed.

To summarize, the research we report in this article tests the hypothesis that inducing a cultural mindset can influence the extent to which individuals see a message and its source in relation to one another. We suggest that a collective mindset leads people to notice this relation and that their consequent elaboration of it leads to improved memory for the source information. This improved memory is accompanied by an increase in their sensitivity to the fit between the endorser and the message. This sensitivity, in turn, leads them to have a more favorable attitude toward the ad when they perceive the fit to be high. If, however, they perceive the fit to be low, their evaluations will be more negative. Thus, fit will have a greater impact on their evaluations. In contrast, we expected people with an individualist mindset to think about the source and the message independently of one another. Consequently, the fit between the endorser and the message should have little impact on these participants.

## Current studies

To test these hypotheses, we primed cultural mindsets in different experiments by using pronoun circling tasks that asked

participants to circle first person singular pronouns or first person plural pronouns (Gardner et al., 1999; Oyserman et al., 2009), a scrambled sentence task where they had to unscramble sentences containing first person singular or plural pronouns (Srull & Wyer, 1980) or a task in which they wrote about how they are similar or different to their family and friends (Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991).

In Experiment 1, participants who had been culturally primed read a set of statements made by different endorsers about different brands. Later, their memory for the source of these messages was assessed. We expected that priming a collectivist mindset (relative to an individualist mindset) would increase individuals' disposition to think about a message in relation to its source as evidenced by better memory for source–message relationships. In Experiments 2–4, we presented culturally primed participants with ads that were either high or low in endorser–message fit. We assessed the extent to which participants with a collectivist mindset (as opposed to those with an individualist mindset) were sensitive to the fit between the endorser and the message. In doing so, we examined how fit might originate from a match between the endorsement (i.e., message) and either a) nonverbal cues exhibited by the endorser or b) other characteristics of the endorser himself (e.g., his age).

## Experiment 1

We hypothesized that individuals with a collectivist mindset are better at connecting a message to its endorser than persons with an individualist mindset. To this extent, they should be better able to remember the relationships between endorsers and the messages they generate. Experiment 1 evaluated this possibility.

### Method

#### Participants

Ninety-six Hong Kong university students participated in this study in exchange for HK \$40. They were assigned to conditions of a 2 (mindset: individual vs. collectivist)  $\times$  2 (endorser: local vs. foreign) between-subjects design.

#### Procedure

Participants were told that they would first complete a test of English proficiency being conducted by the language department of the university and would then complete another task that investigated how people evaluate product and brand information. On this pretense, they were first given 10 sets of words and asked to arrange the words in each set to form a sentence. In the *individualist mindset* condition, participants unscrambled 6 sentences containing first-person singular pronouns (I, my, mine etc.) along with 4 other neutral sentences. In the *collectivist mindset* condition, participants unscrambled 6 sentences containing first-person plural pronouns (we, our, us etc.) along with 4 other neutral sentences.

After completing this task, participants moved on to the product information task. They were told that they would be given a comment about 10 different products, each made by a different celebrity, and that they should consider them

carefully so they could answer questions about them later. The information was presented sequentially on slides for 15 s each. Each slide contained the brand logo (e.g., Apple logo), the product name (e.g., iPad), a comment about the product (e.g., “It’s a stunning device”), and a celebrity’s name. In *endorser-local* conditions, the celebrities were Hong Kong movie stars and in *endorser-foreign* conditions the celebrities were from Hollywood. After the slides had been presented, participants were given a surprise memory test and a few supplementary measures were taken.

### Measures

To assess memory, participants were given a numbered list of the celebrities and a list of the product comments and asked to write the number of the celebrity beside the comment that he or she had made (Appendix 1). The number of correct responses was recorded.

Participants were then given a few supplementary measures to determine how much insight they had about the processing strategies they adopted. They reported the attention they paid to (a) the brand logo, (b) the comment and (c) the person who made it along scales from 0 (not at all) to 10 (very much). They also indicated the extent to which they focused on the message alone independently of who said it along a similar scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (very much) and reported the extent to which their interpretation of the message was affected by who said it along a scale from 0 (not influenced at all) to 10 (influenced a lot). Finally, as a manipulation check, they indicated the extent to which they perceived themselves to be similar to the source along similar scales.

### Results

All measures were analyzed as a function of mindset and endorser conditions. Means are reported in Table 1.

#### Manipulation check

Participants indicated that they felt more similar to the spokespersons when they were primed with a collectivist mindset ( $M = 6.15$ ,  $SD = 2.06$ ) than when they had been primed with an individualist mindset ( $M = 5.31$ ,  $SD = 2.02$ ),  $F(1,92) = 4.03$ ,  $p = .048$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .042$ . No other effects were significant.

Table 1  
Experiment 1.

Dependent var.	Cultural mindset	M (SD)	CI [low range, high range]
Similarity to endorser	Individualist	5.31 <sup>a</sup> (2.02)	95% CI [4.45, 6.15]
	Collectivist	6.15 <sup>b</sup> (2.06)	95% CI [5.26, 7.04]
Memory	Individualist	5.04 <sup>a</sup> (3.70)	95% CI [3.48, 6.59]
	Collectivist	6.51 <sup>b</sup> (3.14)	95% CI [5.03, 7.83]
Interpretation of message	Individualist	3.65 <sup>a</sup> (2.71)	95% CI [2.51, 4.79]
	Collectivist	4.66 <sup>a</sup> (2.70)	95% CI [3.50, 5.83]

Note. Means with dissimilar superscripts significantly differ at  $p < .05$  for each dependent variable. Means with similar superscripts do not significantly differ.

### Memory

Analyses of participants’ recognition memory yielded a main effect of mindset,  $F(1,92) = 4.35$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .045$ , that was not contingent on endorser type ( $p = .19$ ). Specifically, participants were better able to identify who had said what if they had a collectivist mindset ( $M = 6.51$ ,  $SD = 3.14$ ) than if they had an individualist mindset ( $M = 5.04$ ,  $SD = 3.70$ ).

### Supplementary measures

Despite differences in memory, participants’ self reports of the attention they paid to different aspects of the message (brand, source, message) did not vary as a function of the manipulated variables (all  $F$ s  $< 1.5$ ). They also did not differ in their reports of how much they focused on the message independently of who said it ( $F < 1$ ). However, participants were more likely to report that their interpretation of the message was influenced by the endorser when they were primed with a collectivist mindset ( $M = 4.66$ ,  $SD = 2.70$ ) than when they were primed with an individualist mindset ( $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 2.71$ ). This marginally significant effect,  $F(1,92) = 3.27$ ,  $p = .07$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .035$  did not depend on whether the source was similar or dissimilar ( $F < 1$ ).

### Discussion

The results of Experiment 1 confirm our hypothesis that individuals with a collectivist mindset are more likely than those with an individualist mindset to form connections between a message and its source, as evidenced by their better memory in the source identification exercise. Note that participants’ cultural similarity to the endorser of the messages did not affect their memory for what they said. Participants reported feeling closer to the endorsers when they had received a collective mindset prime than when they had received an individual mindset prime. However, this similarity to self generalized over type of endorser (local and foreign) and there was no superior memory for local celebrities’ comments. As the supplementary measures indicate, participants also appeared to have little insight regarding the amount of attention they paid to different aspects of the information or how they processed it other than a slight preference indicated for endorser information when they were primed with a collective mindset.

### Experiment 2

If a collectivist mindset disposes people to pay attention to the relationship between the source and message, it should increase their sensitivity to the fit between an endorser and product advertised. Experiment 2 evaluated this possibility. Participants were shown an appeal to support an organization that provides aid to the elderly, featuring either an older endorser or a more youthful one. We expected that participants with a collectivist mindset would be more sensitive to the fit between the endorser and the message than those with an individualist mindset.

## Method

### Procedure

Two hundred thirty-five Hong Kong university students participated for HK \$40. They were assigned to cells of a 2 (mindset: individual vs. collectivist)  $\times$  2 (endorser type: high fit vs. low fit) between-subjects design.

Participants were randomly assigned to computer stations when they arrived at the lab. They were told that they would first complete an English language proficiency task being pretested by the University language center and then would move on to an ad evaluation task.

Cultural mindsets were manipulated by using two different paragraphs to improve the generalizability of our manipulations. In the *individualist mindset* condition, they were asked to highlight first-person singular pronouns (“I”, “my” etc.) whereas in the *collectivist mindset* condition, they were asked to highlight first person plural pronouns (“we”, “our” etc.). Some participants received a paragraph about a trip to the city (Gardner et al., 1999; Kuhnen & Oyserman, 2002) while other participants received a different paragraph about a visit to the mountains (see Oyserman et al., 2009 for how the paragraphs can be modified).

After completing this task, participants were asked to perform an ostensibly unrelated advertisement-evaluation task. Specifically, participants were shown an ad for Helpage International (an organization that supports the elderly). In high fit conditions, the ad featured either an older professional golfer while in low fit conditions, a more youthful one (Appendix 2). In each ad, the picture of the endorser was accompanied by a quote that was attributed to him. The quote “To be happy, age must be carried with dignity” was the same in all ads; only the picture of the endorser differed. Participants then filled out a series of measures.

### Measures

Liking for the ad and the endorser was assessed along scales that ranged from 0 (extremely dislike) to 10 (extremely like). To assess if liking translates into persuasion, we asked participants how likely they would be to volunteer at Helpage and by assisting with various activities including (a) maintaining and updating Helpage’s official database, (b) maintaining and updating Helpage’s Facebook page, (c) designing fliers and posters for fundraisers, (d) stuffing envelopes and (e) answering phone calls and emails. Responses to these activities, along a scale from 0 (extremely disinterested) to 10 (extremely interested), were averaged ( $\alpha = .78$ ). Finally, participants answered open-ended questions concerning their impression of Helpage, and completed demographic questions.

### Results

Preliminary analyses of each dependent variable were performed as a function of mindset and endorser similarity. Results are tabulated in Table 2.

#### Evaluations of the ad

Participants rated the ad more favorably when they were primed with an individualist mindset ( $M = 5.95$ ,  $SD = 1.61$ )

Table 2  
Experiment 2.

Dependent var.	Cultural mindset	Endorser fit	M (SD)	CI [low range, high range]
Ad evaluations	Collectivist	High fit	5.87 <sup>a</sup> (1.50)	95% CI [5.48, 6.25]
		Low fit	5.21 <sup>b</sup> (1.85)	95% CI [4.70, 5.72]
	Individualist	High fit	5.98 <sup>a</sup> (1.70)	95% CI [5.55, 6.42]
		Low fit	5.92 <sup>a</sup> (1.52)	95% CI [5.53, 6.31]
Endorser evaluations	Collectivist	High fit	5.97 <sup>a</sup> (1.56)	95% CI [5.56, 6.37]
		Low fit	5.40 <sup>a</sup> (1.65)	95% CI [4.94, 5.85]
	Individualist	High fit	5.79 <sup>a</sup> (1.57)	95% CI [5.38, 6.19]
		Low fit	5.90 <sup>a</sup> (1.86)	95% CI [5.42, 6.38]
Helping behavior	Collectivist	High fit	4.75 <sup>a</sup> (1.86)	95% CI [4.27, 5.23]
		Low fit	4.22 <sup>a</sup> (1.64)	95% CI [3.71, 4.65]
	Individualist	High fit	5.18 <sup>a</sup> (1.83)	95% CI [4.71, 5.65]
		Low fit	4.57 <sup>a</sup> (1.94)	95% CI [4.07, 5.07]
Thought listings: criticisms of organization	Collectivist	High fit	.25 <sup>a</sup> (.44)	95% CI [.14, .36]
		Low fit	.51 <sup>b</sup> (.51)	95% CI [.37, .65]
	Individualist	High fit	.23 <sup>a</sup> (.42)	95% CI [.12, .39]
		Low fit	.21 <sup>a</sup> (.42)	95% CI [.11, .32]

Note. Means with dissimilar superscripts significantly differ at  $p < .05$  for each dependent variable.

than when they were primed with a collective mindset ( $M = 5.54$ ,  $SD = 1.70$ ),  $F(1,231) = 3.71$ ,  $p = .055$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .016$ . Participants also appeared to show a slightly greater preference for the high fit ad ( $M = 5.92$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ ) than the low fit ad ( $M = 5.59$ ,  $SD = 1.71$ ),  $F(1,231) = 2.85$ ,  $p = .09$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .012$ . We expected that participants with a collectivist mindset, unlike those with an individualist mindset, would be sensitive to the lack of fit between the endorser and the message and would consequently evaluate the ad unfavorably. Although the overall interaction of prime and ad type was not significant,  $F(1,231) = 1.91$ ,  $p = .17$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .008$ , participants who had a collectivist mindset evaluated the high fit ad more favorably ( $M = 5.87$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ) than the low fit ad ( $M = 5.21$ ,  $SD = 1.85$ ),  $F(1,231) = 4.28$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .038$ . In contrast, participants who had an individualist mindset showed no difference in their evaluations of the high fit ad ( $M = 5.98$ ,  $SD = 1.70$ ) and the low fit ad ( $M = 5.92$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ),  $F(1,231) = .04$ ,  $p = .84$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ .

#### Evaluations of the endorser

Although participants’ evaluations of the endorser did not differ across conditions, the pattern of means is consistent with H2. Participants with a collectivist mindset rated the endorser more favorably when the fit was high ( $M = 5.97$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ) than when the fit was low ( $M = 5.40$ ,  $SD = 1.65$ ),  $F(1,231) = 3.11$ ,  $p = .08$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .031$ . In contrast, participants with an individualist mindset rated the endorser similarly when the fit was high ( $M = 5.79$ ) than when it was low ( $M = 5.90$ ,  $SD = 1.86$ ),  $F(1,231) = .13$ ,  $p = .72$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .001$ . The overall interaction of prime and ad type, however, was again not significant,  $F(1,231) = 2.48$ ,  $p = .117$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .011$ .

#### Helping behavior

An analysis of participants’ willingness to help as a function of prime and ad type indicated that participants were more likely to help in the high fit condition ( $M = 4.96$ ,  $SD = 1.85$ ) than in the low fit condition ( $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = 1.81$ ),  $F(1,231) = 5.63$ ,



$p = .02$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .024$ , and were slightly more willing to help if they had an individualist mindset ( $M = 4.87$ ,  $SD = 1.90$ ) than if they had a collectivist mindset ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 1.77$ ,  $F(1,231) = 2.63$ ,  $p = .106$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ) although this was not statistically significant. Although the interaction of the two variables was not significant ( $F(1,231) = 2.62$ ,  $p = .107$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ), the lowest amount of helping behavior was observed when participants were primed with a collectivist mindset and received a low fit ad ( $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ) than in the other three conditions ( $M = 4.83$ ,  $SD = 1.87$ ),  $F(1,233) = 4.51$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .019$ , confirming implications of the judgment data.

#### Thought listings of Helpage

Participants' thoughts about the organization were coded in terms of whether they were critical to the organization (1) or not (0). Participants were more likely to be critical when they were primed with a collectivist mindset ( $M = .38$ ,  $SD = .48$ ) than if they were primed with an individualist mindset ( $M = .22$ ,  $SD = .42$ ),  $F(1,231) = 7.46$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .031$ , and were more critical when the ad showed low fit ( $M = 0.36$ ,  $SD = .48$ ) than when it showed high fit ( $M = .24$ ,  $SD = .45$ ),  $F(1,231) = 4.39$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .019$ . However, the interaction of the two variables was also significant,  $F(1,231) = 5.65$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .024$ . When participants had been primed with a collectivist mindset, they were more critical when the fit was low ( $M = .51$ ,  $SD = .51$ ) than in the high fit condition ( $M = .25$ ,  $SD = .44$ ),  $F(1,231) = 9.09$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .072$ . In contrast, participants were relatively uncritical when they had been primed with an individualist mindset ( $M = .23$  vs.  $.21$  in high and low fit conditions, respectively,  $F < 1$ ).

#### Discussion

The results of this study suggest that participants with a collectivist mindset think more carefully about the relationship between the source and the communication presented in the ad. Participants primed with a collectivist mindset appeared to be more sensitive to the fit between the endorser and the product or service being endorsed as evident in the thought listing data. These data provided some support for the idea that people with a collectivist mindset are relatively more attuned to the connection between the source and the message. They are, however, silent on one specific issue. Advertisements consist of several components which include the product category or service advertised (in this case "Helpage") and the specific message or slogan ("To be happy, age must be carried with dignity"). Participants could have been bothered by either the lack of fit perceived between the youthful endorser and the service being advertised (an organization for the elderly) or by the lack of fit between this endorser and the specific message that was being communicated ("To be happy ..."). Experiments 3 and 4 focus on this specific issue.

#### Experiment 3

The objective of this study was to show that subjects with a collectivist mindset would be more sensitive to the fit between an endorser (source) and the specific message (tag-line) than

those with an individualistic mindset. Past research has often assumed that certain types of endorsers should be used for certain types of product categories. Thus, athletes are often seen endorsing sporting goods and doctors are often enlisted to endorse drugs or medical techniques. However, perceptions of fit go beyond these more obvious assessments. Fit can also be perceived between how the endorser looks and behaves and the message s(he) communicates and this might be independent of the more obvious fit between the endorser and the product category advertised. For example, a rather aloof expression on the face of an endorser coupled with a warm welcoming message is also likely to elicit feelings of lack of fit.

#### Pretest

To construct materials for the main study, we created two ads for sportswear featuring a male cyclist. In the *high-fit* ad, the message, "Let nothing beat you" was attributed to an older endorser who was shown riding a bicycle and looked somewhat exhausted. In the other, *low-fit* ad, the same message was attributed to a youthful endorser who was also riding a bicycle but did not look as tired as the older one.

Eighty-two Hong Kong university students were shown one of the two ads described above and asked to indicate how well the picture in the ad fit with the message along a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (very well). They also indicated the extent to which the endorser was appropriate for the ad, how much they liked the ad and how much they liked the endorser featured in the ad along scales from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a lot).

As expected, the elderly endorser provided a better fit to the statement attributed to him ( $M = 5.17$ ,  $SD = 2.47$ ) than the youthful endorser ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 2.23$ ),  $F(1,80) = 8.74$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .098$ . The elderly endorser was also seen as more appropriate ( $M = 5.68$ ,  $SD = 2.18$ ) than the youthful one ( $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 2.10$ ),  $F(1,80) = 9.55$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .107$ . These differences were also reflected in participants' liking for the endorser and the ad itself. That is, they liked the elderly endorser more ( $M = 4.51$ ,  $SD = 2.03$ ) than the youthful one ( $M = 3.68$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ),  $F(1,80) = 4.32$ ,  $p = .041$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .051$  and liked the ad with the former endorser better ( $M = 4.59$ ,  $SD = 1.97$ ) than the ad with the latter one ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 1.62$ ),  $F(1,80) = 3.84$ ,  $p = .054$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .046$ .

As noted earlier, fit is a relatively ambiguous concept. Although the older endorser provides a better fit when one considers his age and expression with the statement attributed to him (relative to the youthful endorser), it is important to note that the older endorser provides low fit when one considers congruity with the product category (sportswear). Our primary interest was in showing that participants with a collectivist mindset would be more sensitive to the fit between the endorser and the message tagline compared to participants with an individualist mindset. If this fit arises from a match between the endorser and the tagline, we would expect that participants would be more appreciative of the congruity between the non-verbal aspects of the older endorser (i.e., the picture shows him trying very hard) and the slogan ("Let nothing beat you"). Note that the non-verbal aspects of the youthful endorser suggest

that he is not trying very hard and seems incongruous with the same slogan. If however, the fit comes from the match between the endorser and the product category, then collectivists should be more bothered by the lack of fit seen when the older endorser is shown advertising a sports related product category. To sum up, collectivists should evaluate the ad with the older endorser more favorably when they consider the high fit between non-verbal components of the elderly endorser and the message but should evaluate it less favorably if they consider the low fit between the elderly endorser and the product category (sports-wear). Individualists, however, should not show any difference in their evaluations based on either type of fit.

### Method

Eighty-five Hong Kong university students participated for course credit. They were randomly assigned to cells of a 2 (cultural-mindset: individualist vs. collectivist)  $\times$  2 (endorser type: older vs. youthful) between-subjects design.

To manipulate cultural mindset, we used the pronoun-circling task (Gardner et al., 1999). Then, participants were shown one of the two ads for sportswear pretested before and asked to indicate how much they liked the endorser and the ad along two scales from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a lot). Participants were then asked to write down their thoughts about the endorser's appropriateness. These thought listings were coded to indicate the extent to which they mentioned (a) the fit between the endorser and the slogan and (b) the fit between the endorser and the product category.

### Results

#### Ad evaluations

Participants' liking for the ad was marginally greater when it featured an older endorser ( $M = 5.20$ ,  $SD = 1.91$ ) than when it featured a youthful one ( $M = 4.49$ ,  $SD = 1.96$ ),  $F(1,81) = 2.74$ ,  $p = .10$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .033$ . The interaction of cultural mindset and endorser type was marginally significant,  $F(1,81) = 3.14$ ,  $p = .08$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .037$ , and indicated that this difference was more evident when a collectivist mindset had been primed (5.59 vs.

4.13, for the older endorser ad and the youthful endorser ad respectively),  $F(1,81) = 6.35$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .106$ , than when an individualist mindset had been primed (4.80 vs. 4.85, respectively,  $F < 1$ ) (Table 3).

#### Endorser evaluations

Consistent with the pretest, participants liked the elderly endorser more ( $M = 5.50$ ,  $SD = 2.18$ ) than the youthful one ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 2.08$ ),  $F(1,81) = 6.69$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .076$ . As we expected, however, this difference depended on participants' cultural mindset, as evidenced by a significant interaction of cultural-mindset and endorser type,  $F(1,81) = 5.14$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .059$ . Participants with a collectivist mindset reported greater liking for the elderly endorser ( $M = 6.14$ ,  $SD = 2.49$ ) than for the youthful one ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = 1.98$ ),  $F(1,81) = 12.53$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .210$ , whereas participants with an individualist mindset did not differ in their liking for the two endorsees in these ads (4.85 vs. 4.70, respectively;  $F < 1$ ).

#### Thought listings

Participants' thoughts about the endorser were coded to determine if they had mentioned the slogan when asked about the endorser. Participants with a collectivist mindset were more likely to mention the slogan and whether it matched the endorser when they had viewed the ad with the older endorser (.36) than when they had seen the ad with the youthful endorser (.10),  $F(1,81) = 6.85$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .101$ . In contrast, participants with an individualist mindset did not differ in the proportion of times they mentioned the slogan in the two conditions (.06 vs. .05, respectively),  $F < 1$ . Although the interaction of primed cultural mindset and endorser type was only marginally significant,  $F(1,81) = 3.06$ ,  $p = .08$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .038$  a post-hoc analysis of the collectivist mindset-high fit condition versus all the three other conditions, was significant,  $F(1,80) = 12.87$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .139$ .

Participants' thoughts about the endorser were also coded to assess if the participant mentioned the endorser's fit with the product category. An analysis of the proportion of times this was mentioned revealed no significant main effects or interactions ( $F$ s  $< 1$  except the main effect of cultural mindset  $F = 2.01$ ,  $p = .16$ ).

### Discussion

The results of this experiment provided evidence that inducing a collectivist mindset increases sensitivity to the relations among different components of an ad. That is, participants with a collectivist mindset were more sensitive to the fit between the endorser's message and nonverbal cues that the endorser conveyed. This was evident in both participants' liking for the endorser and their liking for the ad as well as thought listing data.

This experiment confounded the type of endorser with the degree of endorser-message fit. This provided a more robust test of people's sensitivity to this fit. That is, although youthful endorsees are normally used in ads for sportswear, participants evaluated the older endorser more favorably when his endorsement fit the contextual information. Nevertheless, we

Table 3  
Experiment 3.

Dependent var.	Cultural mindset	Endorser type	M (SD)	CI [low range, high range]
Ad evaluation	Collectivist	Older	5.59 <sup>a</sup> (2.18)	95% CI [4.63, 6.56]
		Younger	4.13 <sup>b</sup> (2.16)	95% CI [3.20, 5.06]
	Individualist	Older	4.80 <sup>a</sup> (1.64)	95% CI [4.03, 5.57]
		Younger	4.85 <sup>a</sup> (1.76)	95% CI [4.03, 5.67]
Endorser evaluation	Collectivist	Older	6.14 <sup>a</sup> (2.49)	95% CI [5.03, 7.24]
		Younger	3.87 <sup>b</sup> (1.98)	95% CI [3.01, 4.73]
	Individualist	Older	4.85 <sup>b</sup> (1.87)	95% CI [3.79, 5.73]
		Younger	4.70 <sup>b</sup> (2.18)	95% CI [3.68, 5.72]
Thoughts relating endorser with slogan	Collectivist	Older	.36 <sup>a</sup> (.492)	95% CI [.15, .58]
		Younger	.10 <sup>b</sup> (.301)	95% CI [-.04, .23]
	Individualist	Older	.06 <sup>b</sup> (2.36)	95% CI [-.06, .17]
		Younger	.05 <sup>b</sup> (.218)	95% CI [-.05, .15]

Note. Means with dissimilar superscripts significantly differ at  $p < .05$  for each dependent variable.



conducted an additional experiment in which the endorser was kept constant and only the message was varied to create high and low fit ads.

## Experiment 4

### Method

One hundred forty-eight Hong Kong undergraduate students participated for course credit. They were randomly assigned to cells of a 2 (mindset: individualist vs. collectivist)  $\times$  2 (endorser–message fit: high vs. low) between-subjects design. Participants were told that they would be participating in several different studies that had been put together to give them 1 h of course credit. Their cultural mindset was manipulated using an essay writing task that ostensibly assessed their language skills. Participants were given the task employed by Trafimow et al. (1991) and asked to write an essay on either what they had in common with their friends and relatives (*collectivist mindset* conditions) or how they were uniquely different from their friends and family (*individualist mindset* conditions).

After completing this task, they were asked to move on to the second study which solicited their views on ads and how different elements of an ad fit together. Under this pretext, they were shown either a high-fit or a low-fit ad. The high-fit ad employed in Experiment 3 was modified to make two versions that were identical in all respects except for the message and the addition of a name to the cyclist (“Aleksandr Bodak”). In *high-fit* conditions, the message read “Let nothing beat you” whereas in *low-fit* conditions, it read, “Be cool and trendy”. Participants were asked to rate how much they liked the product featured, the ad and the endorser along scales from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a lot).

Finally, manipulation checks were administered. Participants indicated how well the endorser fit with the tag-line along a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (very well), how appropriate they felt the endorser was for the ad along a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (very appropriate) and the extent to which they felt different from or similar to others along a scale that ranged from 0 (different from others) to 10 (similar to others).

### Results

#### Manipulation checks

*Fit between the endorser and the message.* Participants reported greater fit when the older endorser appeared with the tagline, “Let nothing beat you” ( $M = 5.55$ ,  $SD = 2.92$ ) than when he appeared with the tagline, “Be cool and trendy” ( $M = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 2.57$ ),  $F(1,144) = 34.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .192$ .

*Endorser appropriateness.* They also reported that the endorser was more appropriate when in the fit conditions ( $M = 5.49$ ,  $SD = 2.68$ ) than when in the low fit conditions ( $M = 2.85$ ,  $SD = 2.37$ ),  $F(1,144) = 39.99$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .217$ .

*Cultural mindset.* Participants with a collectivist mindset reported feeling more similar to others ( $M = 6.16$ ,  $SD = 2.18$ )

Table 4  
Experiment 4.

Dependent var.	Cultural mindset	Fit with ad message	M (SD)	CI [low range, high range]
Product liking	Collectivist	High fit	4.67 <sup>a</sup> (2.45)	95% CI [3.87, 5.46]
		Low fit	3.50 <sup>b</sup> (1.83)	95% CI [2.86, 4.14]
	Individualist	High fit	3.38 <sup>b</sup> (2.11)	95% CI [2.67, 4.08]
		Low fit	4.00 <sup>b</sup> (1.93)	95% CI [3.37, 4.64]
Ad liking	Collectivist	High fit	5.44 <sup>a</sup> (2.49)	95% CI [4.63, 6.24]
		Low fit	3.82 <sup>b</sup> (2.08)	95% CI [3.10, 4.55]
	Individualist	High fit	3.84 <sup>b</sup> (2.59)	95% CI [2.98, 4.70]
		Low fit	4.05 <sup>b</sup> (2.29)	95% CI [3.30, 4.81]
Endorser liking	Collectivist	High fit	4.97 <sup>a</sup> (2.36)	95% CI [4.21, 5.74]
		Low fit	3.59 <sup>b</sup> (2.17)	95% CI [2.83, 4.35]
	Individualist	High fit	3.51 <sup>b</sup> (2.36)	95% CI [2.73, 4.30]
		Low fit	4.05 <sup>b</sup> (2.49)	95% CI [3.24, 4.86]

Note. Means with dissimilar superscripts significantly differ at  $p < .05$  for each dependent variable.

than did those with an individualist mindset ( $M = 4.84$ ,  $SD = 2.44$ ),  $F(1,146) = 12.08$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .076$ .

### Dependent variables

*Reactions to the product.* Analysis of product liking judgments revealed a significant interaction of cultural mindset and fit  $F(1,144) = 6.66$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .044$ . Participants with a collectivist mindset liked the product more in high fit conditions ( $M = 4.67$ ,  $SD = 2.45$ ) than in low fit conditions ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 1.83$ ,  $F(1,144) = 5.58$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .068$ ). In contrast, participants with an individualist mindset did not differ in their evaluations of the product in the two conditions (3.38 vs. 4.00, respectively;  $F = 1.48$ ,  $p = .23$ ). See Table 4.

*Reactions to the ad.* Analysis of participants' liking for the ad revealed marginally significant effects of mindset,  $F(1,144) = 3.061$ ,  $p = .08$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .021$  and fit,  $F(1,144) = 3.19$ ,  $p = .08$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .022$ , and a significant interaction of the two variables,  $F(1,144) = 5.45$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .036$ . That is, although participants liked the high fit ad better ( $M = 4.64$ ,  $SD = 2.54$ ) than the low fit ad ( $M = 3.93$ ,  $SD = 2.18$ ), this difference was far more evident when they had a collectivist mindset (5.44 vs. 3.82, respectively),  $F(1,144) = 8.36$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .111$  than when they had an individualist mindset (3.84 vs. 4.05, respectively),  $F < 1$ .

*Reactions to the endorser.* Analysis of participants' liking for the endorser also revealed a significant interaction of cultural mindset and fit,  $F(1,144) = 6.21$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .041$ . Participants with a collectivist mindset liked the endorser more in the high fit conditions ( $M = 4.97$ ,  $SD = 2.36$ ) than in the low fit conditions ( $M = 3.59$ ,  $SD = 2.17$ ),  $F(1,144) = 6.34$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .087$ . In contrast, participants with an individualist mindset showed little difference in their reactions to the endorser when they saw the high fit ad ( $M = 3.51$ ,  $SD = 2.36$ ) or the low fit ad ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 2.49$ ),  $F < 1$ .

## Discussion

The results of Experiment 4 confirmed the conclusions drawn in Experiment 3. Participants' reactions to the high fit ad were more favorable when they had a collectivist mindset than when they had an individualist mindset. These respondents were more attuned to the fit between the endorser and the message being communicated. As indicated earlier, fit could come from the consistency between the message and how it was said as well as who said it. In Experiment 4, the endorser's image fit that of someone working hard, trying not to let anything beat him. In contrast, his image did not fit the idea of being cool and trendy. Participants who had a collectivist mindset were more sensitive to this difference than participants with an individualist mindset and consequently evaluated the ad more favorably when the message fit the endorser's image.

## General discussion

Our research shows that general differences in information processing, activated independently of the message itself, can influence recipients' sensitivity to the relationship between the message and its source. We found that the disposition to think about these features of the ad as independent or interconnected affected their memory for this relationship. Participants who were primed with a collective mindset showed greater memory for what an endorser said about a product relative to those primed with an individualist mindset and this difference did not depend on whether the endorser was similar to the participants or not (Experiment 1). Cultural mindsets also affected perceptions of the fit as participants appeared to be more critical and sensitive about a source's relationship to the content of the message (Experiment 2). Given that fit can be perceived between different elements of the ad, we tested whether participants were indeed paying attention to the fit between the endorser's image and the message (as opposed to the fit between the endorser and the product category advertised) in a follow up experiment (Experiment 3). We found that collectivists were more sensitive to fit and evaluated the ads more negatively when fit was low than when it was high. Finally, keeping all else constant, we showed that fit between an endorser and the message can lead to more favorable evaluations if the fit is good (Experiment 4).

Our conceptualization was based on the idea that cultural mindsets can affect the way that information is processed (Oyserman, 2011). Priming an individualist mindset activates a tendency to segment and separate the core elements of a communication from its context whereas priming a collectivist mindset activates a tendency to see connections between these elements. This tendency led individuals with a collectivist mindset to be sensitive to the fit between the message, the person to whom it was attributed and the product being advocated.

The four studies in conjunction raise some important issues about how information is processed by people with different cultural dispositions. Persuasion research has often implicitly assumed that different components of a communication (the











source, the type of product attributes, etc.) have independent effects. Thus, the effects of source similarity are considered independently of the message that is communicated. However, Oyserman et al. (2009) suggest that cultural differences in information processing might affect how people process components of a communication and whether they consider these components in relation to one another. Priming cultural mindsets not only affects whether people think of themselves in relation to others but also whether they think of information independently or not. Although these differences have been identified in other domains such as evaluation of brand extensions (Ahluwalia, 2008; Monga & John, 2007), their implications for the processing of persuasive messages (in particular, responses to advertisements) have not been clearly articulated. For example, past research has examined the effect of cultural orientations on liking for communications that are tailored to fit these orientations (Han & Shavitt, 1994; Uskul & Oyserman, 2010). The current research adds to this body of literature by focusing on how these orientations might elicit mindsets to think of different aspects of the ad in relation to one another. In doing so, it paves the way for additional research that could further our understanding of how cultural differences in information processing might affect the meaning that people draw from persuasive communications (Aaker & Maheswaran, 1997; Han & Shavitt, 1994).

Two other aspects of our work are worth noting. First, all our experiments were conducted with Hong Kong participants and the stimulus materials used pertained to foreign endorsers (except in Experiment 1). Thus, similarity between the endorsers and the recipients of the message was low and it seemed unlikely that the effects we observed were a result of differences in how participants saw the endorser in relation to themselves. Second, the cultural mindsets we considered were experimentally induced and therefore do not directly reflect chronic differences between Asian and Western participants. As Oyserman (2011) points out, however, there are typically comparable effects of situationally induced differences in collectivism and individualism and those that exist outside the laboratory. It is interesting to speculate that general cultural differences in the impact of marketing communications may be traceable to differences of the sort we have identified.

Other implications of our research should also be noted. The growth of the internet has led to a different marketing landscape in which consumers actively seek out the opinions of other consumers before purchase. The extent to which this occurs not only varies across cultures but might also be affected by the cultural mindset that is activated at the time information is received. How people remember this information and the manner in which they interpret it is of obvious importance. By identifying the heightened sensitivity that collectivists have to source–message connections, we point out an additional path by which persuasion can occur. Past research has typically suggested that collectivists tend to see themselves as members of a larger group and consequently might be more willing to take into account others' opinions. However, our work suggests an additional reason why messages have more or less of an impact.

**Appendix 1. Memory task used in Experiment 1**

1. Charlene Choi, Hong Kong
2. Jackie Chan, Hong Kong
3. Isabella Leong, Hong Kong
4. Leon Lai, Hong Kong
5. Joey Yung, Hong Kong
6. Angelababy, Hong Kong
7. Aaron Kwok, Hong Kong
8. Jacky Cheung, Hong Kong
9. Tony Leung, Hong Kong
10. Andy Lau, Hong Kong

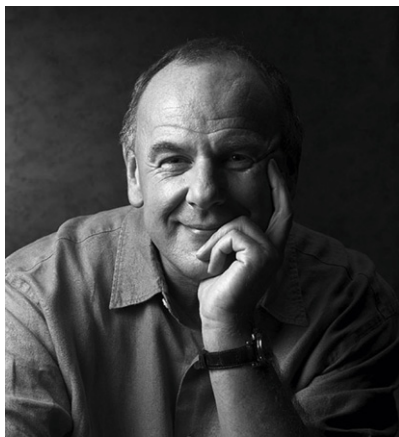
	Fill in the corresponding number from the list above
 <b>Adidas Sportswear</b> "My friend likes it"	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <b>Beats Headphone</b> "Fashionable and cool"	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <b>Abercrombie &amp; Fitch</b> "It is very trendy"	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <b>Chevignon Jeans</b> "Just like any other brand, nothing special"	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <b>CASIO Casio G-Shock Watch</b> "Durable and nice"	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <b>Ray-ban Sunglasses</b> "Stylish"	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <b>Converse All Star Shoes</b> "Nice colors and design"	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <b>Lenovo Notebook</b> "It is too heavy"	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <b>MUJI Umbrella</b> "Simple and reliable"	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <b>Apple iPad</b> "It is simply a stunning device"	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Appendix 2. Stimuli for Experiment 2**

Older endorser

Younger endorser

*Elderly endorser*



*"To be happy, age must be carried with dignity"*

- Jim Pearson, Professional Golfer

HelpAge International is a global organization working towards helping older people claim their rights, challenge discrimination and overcome poverty, so that they can lead dignified, secure, active and healthy lives.



*Young endorser*



*"To be happy, age must be carried with dignity"*

- Adam Scott, Professional Golfer

HelpAge International is a global organization working towards helping older people claim their rights, challenge discrimination and overcome poverty, so that they can lead dignified, secure, active and healthy lives.

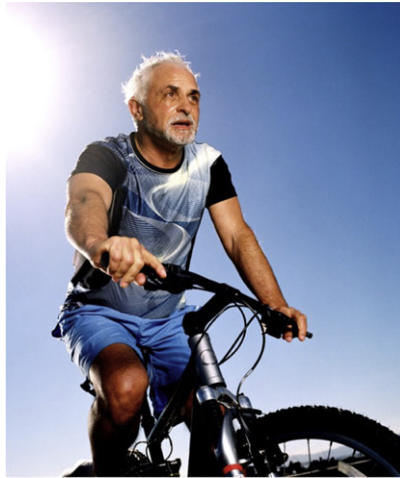




### Appendix 3. Stimuli for Experiment 3

Older and younger endorsers paired with the message “Let Nothing Beat You”

*Elderly and youthful endorsers paired with message “Let Nothing Beat You”*



Planet Sports...  
Let Nothing Beat You.



Planet Sports...  
Let Nothing Beat You.



#### Appendix 4. Stimuli for Experiment 4

Same endorser with different messages for “low fit” and “high fit” conditions

*Same endorser with different messages for “low fit” and “high fit” conditions*



**“Be cool and trendy”**  
Aleksandr Bodak



**“Let nothing beat you”**  
Aleksandr Bodak



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