Warmth and Competence – How to Become a Trustworthy “Lovable Star” in Business

Introduction
People admire successful people, which raises the question: What makes some individuals particularly successful? Stereotype Content Model suggests that admired people are competent as well as likeable. These two primary dimensions – capability and warmth – inspire trust and have a strong impact on the impression formation process. Trust, in particular, is an important factor in business relations as customers tend to buy from people they consider trustworthy. A good relationship between seller and buyer can also enhance the reputation of a company. It should, therefore, be interesting for companies to know how to turn their employees into trustworthy “lovable stars”. In studying business relationships, Casciaro and Lobo (2005) propose four characters along the likability and competence dimensions. They established four archetypes: the “incompetent jerk”, who is neither likeable nor competent; the “competent jerk”, who is seen as unpleasant but provides great expertise and competence; the “lovable fool”, who is a delight to have around but lacks competence; and, finally, the “lovable star”, who is both smart and likeable, and therefore in great demand.

This study aims to answer whether a layperson can portray the four different characters in accordance with the likability/competence matrix. In other words, is it possible to design a “lovable star” and use him or her in business encounters? To manipulate likability and competence a character called “Anna Müller” was created. In four videos, “Anna Müller” portrayed the four characters through her writing style, appearance, voice, and body language. The videos were used in an experiment and tested on a total of 132 participants. The study aims to investigate if a certain use of body language might influence likability and competence perceptions in business encounters. The challenge lies in measuring the evoked emotions. Furthermore, the strength of the impact on trust was tested. As expertise knowledge can be trained, the question remains if the same is applicable for the likability dimension.

Theoretical Background
The underlying theory of nonverbal communication is split in two subsections; impression formation and body language. The importance of warmth and competence is going back to Asch’s work in 1946, in which he could form a person’s entire impression by adding different traits (Asch, 1946). Forming first impressions and the primary judgements of others are often made incredibly fast and unconsciously (Ambady, Krabbenhoft, & Hogan, 2006, p. 4). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62). When people first meet they judge each other based on their warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2008, p. 62).
paternalistic prejudice (Fiske et al., 2002, p. 881). Low warmth and high competence people are classified as envious persons, while people who are high in both dimensions are admired (Fiske et al., 2002, p. 881). Casciaro and Lobo (2005, p. 1) studied warmth and competence in the business world in the context of forming teams with colleagues. They suggest a 2x2 matrix with the following four quadrants:

![Likability/competence matrix (Casciaro & Lobo, 2005, p. 5)](image)

Their study revealed that people like to work with people who are similar to them (Casciaro & Lobo, 2005, p. 4). When choosing a project partner, people prefer to work with the “lovable star” and hardly anyone would voluntarily choose the “incompetent jerk” to work with (Casciaro & Lobo, 2005, p. 5). However, if someone is strongly disliked, no one wants to work with that person, no matter how competent the person seems to be (Casciaro & Lobo, 2005, p. 3). Unlike the pleasant person, people prefer to work with a nice but incompetent person (Casciaro & Lobo, 2005, p. 3). In addition, a high level of both warmth and capability lead also to trust (Aaker, Garbinsky, & Vohs, 2012, p. 194). The stereotype content model (SCM) can also be applied to companies and brands (Aaker et al., 2012, p. 193). The study revealed that warmth and competence lead to admiration for a brand or a company too and consequently results in a higher willingness to purchase because people tend to trust the particular brand (Aaker et al., 2012, p. 191). A different study revealed that a credible salesperson is both trustworthy and competent (Arndt, Evans, Landry, Mady, & Pongpatipat, 2014, p. 19). Companies and people are striving to become “lovable stars”. The question remains: is it possible to design “lovable stars” in business encounters? In order to answer this question a certain stimulus material was developed. As body language was important for the development of the stimulus material the related theoretical and practical background is described briefly. Nonverbal behaviour can be summarised as movements, positions, facial expressions, movements of the eyes, movements of the head, whole body actions, motion of arms, legs or feet, as well as changes in the tone of voice (Hall, Coats, & Lavonia Smith, 2005, p. 898). In social interactions nonverbal cues are steadily projecting warmth or coldness as well as competence or incompetence (Cuddy et al., 2011, p. 88). Nonverbal warm cues are defined as leaning forward, nodding, moving the body towards the other person or having a relaxed and nonintrusive hand gesture. In contrast, nonverbal cold cues include having a tense body posture, leaning backwards, moving the body away from the other person and using tense and intrusive hand gestures (Cuddy et al., 2011, p. 89). Nonverbal competent cues are described as having an open and expansive attitude and exuding power and dominance (Cuddy et al., 2011, p. 90). Last but not least, the nonverbal incompetent cues are defined as exuding no confidence in a person’s general impression (Cuddy et al., 2011, p. 90). Appearance conveys information such as age, sex, height, weight and physical characteristics of a person (Urbaniak, 2005, p. 13). Urbaniak (2005, p. 13) states that appearance gives information on a person’s personality. Gray and Ambady (2006) found that emotions can be recognised in posed expressions – that is photographs (Gray & Ambady, 2006). They further
claim that vocal cues are more important than the actual content of a speech (Gray & Ambady, 2006). They argue that fast speech is related to pleasant emotions whereas slow speech is related to sadness and therefore, unpleasant emotions (Gray & Ambady, 2006). In a business environment, Williams and Page (2013, p. 8) state that rapid speech is connected with competence, intelligence, dominance and dynamism. In contrast, slow speech leads to a composed, people-oriented, honest and benevolent impression. Finally, low credibility is linked with slow speech, which includes long pauses and poor pronunciation (Williams & Page, 2013, p. 8).

Methodology
To answer the research question whether a layperson can portray the four different characters in accordance with the Casciaro and Lobos (2005) likability/competence matrix the character “Anna Müller” was created. “Anna Müller” is a fictive sales person who provides a consultation for a Swiss pension fund recorded on video. By combining different traits such as speech, appearance, voice and body language, four different sales encounters were designed. Starting with speech; the main aim for the development of the different sales texts was to create four different emotions relating to the four quadrants of the likability/competence matrix from Casciaro and Lobo (2005, p. 5). Furthermore, the widely spread two-dimensional structure from Rosenberg, Nelson & Vivekananthan (1968, p. 290) has been used for the different sales texts. The way people dress does strongly influence a person’s perception, especially in the business environment as a salesperson’s appearance influences his/her credibility (Wood, Boles & Babin, 2008, p. 31). In order to obtain undistorted results, the layperson was neither extreme in her choice of clothing nor in the makeup she wore. The appearance was in each video the same and no changes were made in order to better fit the layperson within each of the four quadrants. The layperson wore the same adequate and conventional clothes and the same makeup for every shoot. In order to keep an authenticity in the tone of voice the texts were spoken in the native language of the spokesperson. Thus, the speech was held in Swiss German and more precisely in the native dialect of the spokesperson. As the four different characters are associated with a certain security or insecurity in their way of speaking the spokesperson had to keep the flow of speech natural. Several instances of stuttering and thinking breaks were inserted in the speech. Lastly, body language which includes gesture, facial expression and body posture was analysed. To define the body language used by “Anna Müller”, a structured analysis according to Mayring (2010) was used and led to several behavioural patterns that were defined and systematically categorised. Furthermore, a coding scheme was used in order to operationalize the individual movements of body language. The allocation of the body language to the four different videos is based on the perceived warmth and competence of each character. The elaborated stimulus material was then given to the layperson to portray the four different characters in front of the camera. In the end four videos of the layperson portraying the “competent jerk”, “incompetent jerk”, “lovable fool” and the “lovable star” were recorded. Each video was about two to three minutes long and was tested in an online experiment. As the manipulation of likability and competence through body language needs to be observable and verified, seven independent judges (n = 7) were asked to rate the body language in each video and therefore the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) was applied. First, the surveyed data had to be coded and operationalized. All ICC values are above .7 which means that the raters agree on their judgement of the body language of “Anna Müller” in all videos (α = .733; ICC > .769). Thus, a consistency in the observation of the body language and a good agreement were achieved and the results were highly significant (p<.001). As the interrater reliability was achieved, the videos were used for the experiment. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in this research. The questionnaire was
established to measure likability and competence and its impact on trust as it can also be seen in the following conceptual model. The idea of the conceptual model in brief; a person who is seen as a sender consists of appearance, voice and the communicated content, thus the spoken words (Mehrabian, 1969). From these attributes the receivers derive likability and competence and this in turn leads either to trust or distrust (Fiske & Dupree, 2014, p. 13593). The model predicts that both a seller’s competence and likability lead to trust (Wood et al., 2008, p. 28). Therefore, trust was defined as the dependent variable. This is also based on the works of Fiske and Dupree (2014, p. 13593), which predicts that competence and likability both lead to trust. More precisely, Fiske et al., (2007, p. 77) argue that people firstly make their judgement related to the likability dimension and then to the competence dimension. Moreover, Fiske et al., (2007, p. 77) state that the competence dimension is judged in order to assess the degree of respect. This confirms the theory of Cuddy et al. (2011, p. 74) where competence judgements are made to rate the other’s ability to enact their intentions. The model of trust by Martin (2014, p. 47 f.) stipulates that high competence and high affinity lead to trust. The following hypotheses were derived from the literature:

The central question in this paper asks whether or not a layperson can display the different roles of the likability/competence matrix. Therefore, the displayed likability and displayed competence were tested on their impact to perceived likability and perceived competence. Furthermore, the level of perceived likability and competence was tested on trust perceptions of a person. The variable likability was tested by the construct ‘likableness’ used by Reinhard, Messner, & Sporer (2006, p. 254) and by the construct ‘goodwill’ used by McCroskey and Teven (1999, p. 95). The variable competence is measured by the construct ‘Salespeople’s expertise’ from Stock & Hoyer (2005, p. 545) and by the variable ‘competence’ by McCroskey and Teven (1999, p. 95). The dependent variable trust is measured with the construct ‘trustworthiness’ of McCroskey and Teven (1999, p. 95). Already tested scales were used in the questionnaire and a reliability of $\alpha=.855$ was achieved. At the end of the questionnaire a manipulation check was included. Participants had to assign the person in the video into the corresponding quadrant. Four videos led to four questionnaires. All questionnaires where pretested with twelve potential respondents. This pre-test revealed no major problems, so we used the measures as manipulation checks for the final study. Participants of the between-subject experimental study were randomly assigned to four groups. The procedure of the online experiment was explained in an introductory e-mail. However, participants were not informed about the manipulation or the purpose of the experimental study. After watching the video participants were asked to proceed to the questionnaire. The whole experiment lasted about 15 minutes and the results are described in the following section. In order to achieve a high response rate surveys often guarantee confidentiality and/or anonymity (Berekoven, Eckert & Ellenrieder, 1999, p. 115).
Results
Bachelor’s and Master’s students (n = 132) from the School of Management and Law were randomly selected and assigned into one of the four experimental groups. The sample consisted of 91 (68.9%) females and 41 (31.1%) males. The average age of the subject was 26.01 (SD = 5.33). The Chi-square test did not show any significant differences between groups on the variables age and gender. The four groups were surveyed with a computer-based online questionnaire. The data analysis fully confirmed the proposed hypothesis. The manipulation of likability and competence by means of content, appearance, voice and body language was successful. The likeable “Anna Müller” was systematically judged as pleasant, whereas the unlikeable character was perceived as unpleasant at the p = 0.05 level. The same results were revealed for the competence analysis of “Anna Müller”. Moreover, these differences were systematic and highly significant (p<.001). Displayed likability had a strong impact on perceived likability ($\beta = .701$) and in turn displayed competence had a weaker impact on perceived likability ($\beta = .219$). Further analysis showed that displayed competence had a strong impact on perceived competence ($\beta = .711$) and displayed likability had a weaker impact on perceived competence ($\beta = .303$).

Additional analysis showed that there was a significant positive correlation between perceived likability and perceived trust ($r = .725$). A positive correlation was also found between perceived competence and perceived trust ($r = .670$). However, the results show that the likability aspect has the greater impact on trust perception. All tested correlations were highly significant (p<.001). Testing the function that trust is the outcome of perceived likability and perceived competence, a multiple linear regression was carried out. The results depict that the model explains more than 63% ($R^2 = .632$) (p<.001) of variance. Perceived likability and perceived competence both have a highly significant impact on perceived trust. The beta coefficient shows that perceived likability has the stronger influence ($\beta = .546$) on trust than perceived competence ($\beta = .333$). The two-factorial ANOVA on perceived trust showed that no significant interaction between the two variables likability and competence exists (p = .098). Therefore, the manipulation of likability and competence depicted a significant but individual impact on trust perception. The present study revealed that likability and competence both have an influence on trust, which is also depicted in the conceptual model.

Further analysis showed that the “lovable star” enjoys the greatest perceived trust ($M = 5.1324, SD = .99813$), as predicted by the theory of warmth and competence and according to the four quadrants of Casciaro and Lobo (2005, p. 5). Thus, the manipulation of likability and competence – in which both were displayed – leads to the highest level of perceived trust. In turn, the “lovable fool” ($M = 4.1010, SD = 1.14332$) and “competent jerk” ($M = 3.9583, SD = .87988$) are similar regarding perception of trust. The “incompetent jerk” revealed the lowest level of perceived trust ($M = 3.4848, SD = .77880$). Regarding the similar trust perception of the “lovable fool” and “competent jerk”; it is possible that the distinction between these two are marginal and therefore, people make a trade-off between the “lovable fool” and the “competent jerk”. However, this corresponds to the result of SCM studies, where the differentiation was mainly between admiration and disgust (Caprariello, Cuddy & Fiske, 2009, p. 153). Also Geys (2014, p. 1) showed in his study that people make likability-aversions and therefore perceived likeable managers are less preferred than managers with a lower likability perception. Regarding the “incompetent jerk” = lowest trust perception; this is in line with the theory of Casciaro and Lobo (2005, p. 3) in which the “incompetent jerk” is strongly disliked and avoided. At the end of the survey a manipulation check was carried out. The Chi-square test did not show any significant differences between the four different classification possibilities of “Anna Müller” in each video along the quadrants of Casciaro and Lobo (2005, p. 5). As a systematic deviation occurred, the manipulation check was not
successful. Thus, participants could clearly distinguish between the manipulation of likability and competence, but could not place the character in the 2x2 matrix. Subjects might have unconsciously perceived likability and competence. To summarise the findings, the results to emerge from the data support all postulated hypotheses.

**Discussion and Limitations**

In this study the most interesting findings are first, that a certain body language technique could be elaborated in order to influence trust perception. Second, the study showed evidence that a layperson could manipulate likability and competence in such a way that the four warmth-competence combinations were detectable and therefore, the research question can be confirmed. Moreover, the study confirmed the stereotype content model (SCM).

Warmth and competence is a persistent issue in social interactions and a much-debated topic. Scientists agree on the fact that likability and competence lead to trust (e.g. Aaker et al., 2012, p. 194). Yet, no agreement on which dimension is more important and on how these dimensions collaborate has been reached. Moreover, a majority of the reviewed studies were carried out with existing material. Their value is limited by the hindsight bias and they do not clearly establish a cause-effect relationship. Fiske et al. (2002, p. 878) analysed the stereotype content model (SCM) with mixed clusters. Thus, samples rated gender, ethnicity, race, class, age and disability outgroups along the likability and competence dimension (Fiske, et al., 2002, p. 878). Fiske et al (2007, p. 80) carried out another study on warmth and competence, where people had to rate different social groups in an experiment. Additionally, in a later study Fiske and Dupree (2014, p. 13595) analysed warmth and competence ratings on typical American jobs. A further study revealed that training sessions on nonverbal communication might influence both trust perception of a seller and the selling firm (Wood et al., 2008, p. 30). Several researchers either manipulated the warmth or the cold dimension and could therefore evoke disgust or admiration for a subject or object (e.g. Asch, 1946; Caprariello et al., 2009; Nauts, Langner, Huijsmans, Vonk & Wigboldus, 2014). Numerous studies used imaginary situations, for example, different traits were included in texts about persons or groups (Holoien & Fiske, 2013; Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt & Kashima, 2005; Kervyn, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2009; McCarthy & Skowronski, 2011; Nauts et al., 2014; Russell & Fiske, 2008; Scholer & Higgins, 2008; Tausch, 2008). The present study was designed to determine the effect of a sales person portraying different characters on likability and competence perception. Furthermore, the impact of warmth and competence was tested on trust perception. The stimulus material was elaborated specifically for the present experiment, which is an innovative approach in this field. As stated in the literature, a salesperson’s verbal and nonverbal cues significantly influence a buyer’s judgement (Wood et al., 2008, p. 27). Moreover, a credible salesperson – who can influence both customer satisfaction and the perceived business relationship building process – is seen as both trustworthy and competent (Arndt et al., 2014, p. 19).

The promising findings therefore confirm that in order to make a sale, the salesperson needs to exude a sense of confidence. So far, companies mainly focus on expertise training courses. It is agreed that competence is an important factor and can be acquired in training courses. As in our study also Jayanti and Whipple (2008, p. 84) claim that positive performance influences consumer satisfaction and is therefore essential for providing a good service. However, likability has a stronger impact on trust perception. This is in accordance with Arndt et al., (2014, p. 19) who state that the warmth dimension – and not the competence dimension – does strongly influence the relation between a salesperson and a customer. The results of a similar study from Xu, Cenfetelli and Aquino (2016, p. 23) showed that benevolence / likability significantly influenced the perceived satisfaction level. However, the competence belief did not show significant impact on satisfaction, but on the purchase
behaviour (Xu et al., 2016, p. 23). The experiment further showed that using a specific wording and applying a certain body language significantly influences the trust perception in a person. The present thesis offers a body language manual for people concerned (i.e. consultants). This could be used in specific training and coaching programs for employees. As a layperson displayed the four roles it should be possible that other people can manipulate likability and competence in much the same way. Thus, the new findings provide techniques to enhance a sales encounter or a consultation. This study is a further step in the direction of turning employees and CEOs into brand champions (Morhart, Herzog & Tomczak, 2009). If a company could turn its employees into Lovable Stars, a deeper relationship between the buyer and seller may be established and moreover, the image of the company might be enhanced. Our conclusion also supports the findings of Jayanti and Whipple (2008, p. 84), as they state that likability can managed and therefore companies should rather focus on the warmth dimension when recruiting people. Finally, successful sales could be improved. The question remains whether or not the manipulation of competence and likability applies to individuals other than “Anna Müller”. Further research into how to become a ‘lovable star’ may provide interesting insights. Companies are recommended to adapt their current employee training courses to include body language training for employees involved in negotiation and sales. Several limitations have to be mentioned. First, the self-selection bias that always occurs when people decide to participate in an experiment (Falk & Heckman, 2009, p. 537). Second, the Hawthorne-effect might distort experiments as this effect occurs when people know that they are taking part in a study (Falk & Heckman, 2009, p. 537). Furthermore, the self-fulfilling and self-destroying prophecy has to be taken into consideration as subjects might change his or her behaviour in order to answer the study successfully (Atteslander, 2010, p. 188).
References


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