

A Keen Study on the Impact of Celebrity Endorsement of any Product & Service: Indian Market

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ABSTRACT

Due to scarcity of proper “Role Models” in our country the cricketers and the film stars are treated as role models and enjoy a demo-god status among the masses. This phenomenon is highly exploited by the industry to promote their products. The study undergoes a qualitative discussion about this phenomenon. The study touches the areas like how a brand being promoted by the celebrities creates an image in the masses. Does celebrity branding really contribute to the selling volume of the promoted product or it is just an eye candy contributing positively to the wealth of the celebrity. The study also tries to find out what kind of celebrities had been dominated and currently dominating the advertisement market.

Keywords: celebrity branding, product following, brand following

Introduction

In our country we worship the film stars and the Cricketers so much so that they enjoy a demo- god status. The industry uses the images of these celebrities to promote their products. As a result we see different celebrities (film stars & cricketers) promoting different ranges of products – from pen to hairstyling get.

Who is ‘Celebrity?’

Celebrities are people who enjoy public recognition by a large share of a certain group of people. Whereas attributes like attractiveness, extraordinary lifestyle or special skills are just example and specific common characteristics cannot be observed, it can be said that within a corresponding social group celebrities generally differ from the social norm and enjoy a high degree of public awareness. This is true for classic forms of celebrities, like actors (e.g. Amitabh Bachan, Sharukh Khan, Salman Khan, Priyanka Chopra, Shilpa Shetty) models (e.g. Milind Soman., Atul Wokhulu, Meghna Reddy, Sushmita Sen) Sports person (e.g. Sania Nehwal, Mari Con, Brijendra, Virat Kohali, Yuvraj).

‘Celebrity Endorsement’

McCracken's (1989) definition of a celebrity endorser is, "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement (MarComs), is useful, because when celebrities are depicted in MarComs (Marketing Communications), they bring their own culturally related meanings, thereto, irrespective of the required promotional role.

Scope of Celebrity Endorsement

Firms have been juxtaposing their brands and themselves with celebrity endorsers (e.g., athletes, actors) in the hope that celebrities may boost effectiveness of their marketing and/or corporate communication attempts for at least a century. Three of humankind's greatest inventions (cinema, radio, and television) have extended the scope of endorsement as an advertising technique. Today, use of celebrities as part of marketing communications strategy is fairly common practice for major firms in supporting corporate or brand imagery. Today, the use of celebrity advertising for companies has become a trend and a perceived winning formula of

corporate image building and product marketing (Media, July-August 1997).

Celebrity Selection

There are various scientific ways in which the right celebrity is selected for the product endorsement; the following figure shows how celebrity is selected for endorsing

Literature Survey

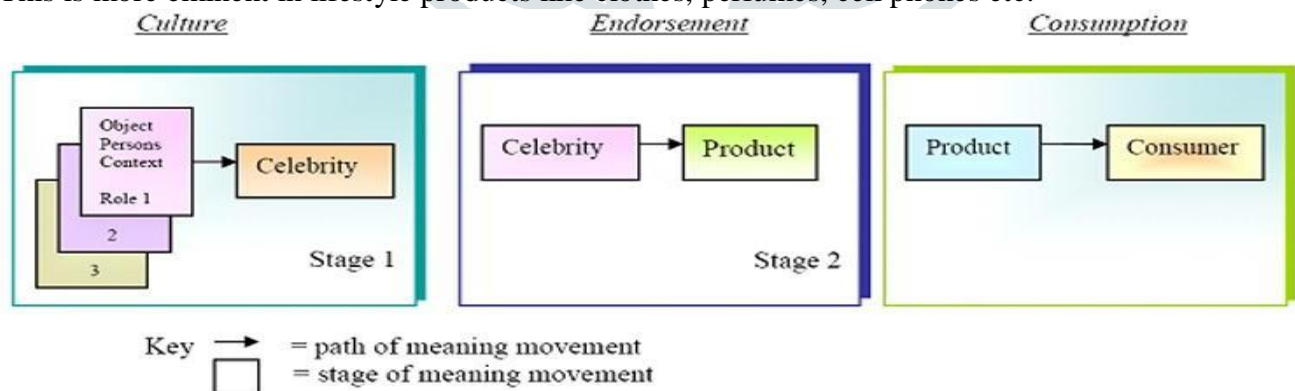
Clark & Horstman , 2003 had made several hypothesis regarding the celebrity branding like i) it gives recall value to the product ii) Celebrity attributes enhance the product iii) the image of the celebrity transfers into the product and the person who use the product also attached to the image.

Mishra and Beatty, 1990, Petty et al, 1983 and Menon et al, 2001 find similar findings. According to these studies people relate themselves more to the product and like the product when the product is being endorsed by popular celebrity.

Mechanism and Theories of Celebrity Endorsement

Grant McCracken has explained in his Meaning Transfer Theory. The theory explains that a celebrity encodes a unique set of meanings which if well used can be transferred to the endorsed product. Such a transfer takes place in three stages “encoding meanings, meaning transfer, meaning capture (Figure 1).

- I. *Encoding Meanings:* Each celebrity has a unique set of meanings, which can be listed by age, gender, race, wealth, personality or lifestyle. In this way, the celebrities encode a set of meanings in their image. For example Preity Zinta can be seen as a lively, charming, bubbly, witty and enthusiastic.
- II. *Meaning Transfer:* This stage transfers those meanings to the product. When skillfully portrayed, celebrities can communicate this image more powerfully than lay endorsers.
- III. *Meaning Capture:* This assumes that consumers purchase products not merely for their functional value but also for their cultural and symbolic value. The theory says that consumers buy the endorsed product with the intention of capturing some of the desirable meanings with which celebrities have passed on to the product. This is more eminent in lifestyle products like clothes, perfumes, cell phones etc.



Objective of the Study

To study about does the celebrity advertisement really helps in increasing the selling volume of the product. To know what kind of product goes with what type of celebrity.

To know does the celebrity branding is dominated by the film stars or by the cricketers or both share equal importance.

Methodology

The study takes into a qualitative study to find the answer of the objective

Discussions

The celebrities get huge amount of money to endorse the product which actually creates recall-value for the product like

Coca Cola - Aamir Khan

Tag – Heuer – Shahrukh Khan Cadbury Chocolate – Amitabh Bachan

The adding up of any celebrity with any brand may not always increase the sales volume but if somehow the image of the product damaged, celebrity endorsing helps in recovering the image. Like when Cadbury India's reputation as a safe chocolate was almost gone due to the worm controversy, they used Amitabh Bachan in a commercial assuring the audience about the quality of the Cadbury. Similarly when Pepsi & Coke was infected by the Pesticides controversy, Pepsi used both SRK & Sachin Tendulkar for damage control & coke used Aamir Khan for image recovery.

Not all products go with the image of all celebrity. It depends on the matching of attributes between the product & the celebrity. In the age of Sunil Gavaskar & Kapil Dev, Gavaskar's attributes matched with the products which were being used by the higher society people & Kapil dev's attributes matched with products that were for common man. This means Gavaskar was much trustworthy for the advertisement of pen & cans and Kapil Dev had gone for shaving cream & bicycles. Kapil's advertisement of Palmolive Ka Jawab nahi in a slightly hariyanvi style is still a legend among the Indian advertisements. Sachin Tendulkar is the first celebrity in India whose mass appeal is so high that he can endorse product for any section of the society. The filmstars before year 2000 has limited endorsement and didn't explore the advertising market of India but post 2000 the scenario has changed. Amitabh Bachan after KBC got huge popularity among the masses & his popularity is being used by various products from Reid & Taylor to Parker. But during his hay day as a superstar in the „80s, he never endorsed anything. Another success story is SRK who is currently endorsing more than 35 products & earned more money from endorsement than his last 2 super hit films Chak DE INDIA & OSO.

The cricketers are also not in the backyard. After winning the T-20 World Cup Indian cricket players also got few numbers of endorsements Dhoni, Yuvraj & Zaheer Khan grabbed few endorsements but in terms of numbers they are much less than the actors.

With the change in strategy of PepsiCo India to promote their „Youngistaan“ campaign they didn't renew their contract with players like Sachin and Sourav. Instead they have taken rising actors like Ranbir Kapoor and Deepika Padukone to promote their product. This incident also indicates that the cricketers are losing their endorsed products to the filmstars. One exception is Sania mirza, in spite of all controversies, off-form and injuries she is able to survive in the advertisement world.

Apart from Big B, SRK and Aamir Khan some other stars also make their own mark in the endorsement market like Hrithik Roshan, Saif Ali Khan, Kareena Kapoor, Priyanka Chopra and Katrina Kaif.

The problem in the endorsement market is that here glamour plays a big role. That is why Abhinav Bindra, the only Indian to win a Gold Medal in the Olympics gets only Samsung as the only product to endorse whereas filmstars gets offers from various companies to endorse their products.

Brand V/s Celebrity

Sometimes the celebrity is more highlighted than the products, making no recall value of the product. When Rahul Dravid advertised for Castrol, the brand gets overshadowed by the celebrity & that is also a wrong choice of celebrity. Dravid is never famous for racing & when he promotes the product, it gives a wrong signal to the customers. The product can use Narain Karthikeyan to endorse it which will give some reliability to the product.

Some success story

Cadbury India used Amitabh Bachan not only to recover their image from worm controversy but also to establish itself as the leading company in the Indian chocolate market.

Aamir Khan's ad campaign „Thanda Matlab Coca-Cola“ was also a huge hit. Not only that the company uses the superstars to come out from the pesticides controversy.

Dabur brings in Amitabh Bachan in the stagnant chawanprash market which brings in boost in market and helps Dabur to common people with the effect of the celebrity; it is very difficult to separate the product from the star. Like Coca-Cola - Aamir Khan, Cadbury- Amitabh Bachan, Santro- SRK. Now, if any one of the company want to change their endorser they have to redesign the product to let out their product from the shadow of the old campaign. In case of celebrity marketing another problem also arise, that no separate brand value grows up for the product unless and until the product is extraordinary. The product is known in the name of the celebrity. Sometimes if the attributes of the celebrity doesn't matches with the product, it also gives a negative attribute to the product endorsed. Like in a Survey study it is found that people locates Amitabh Bachan with Asian Paints the most but in reality Amitabh endorsed Nerolac paints and Nerolac's biggest competitor is Asian paints. So there are certain positive as well as negative points in celebrity branding in India. As a producer of the product the company always wants to minimize the negative sides of the celebrity endorsement and maximize the positive impact of the celebrity endorsement.

The Lux Story: The Lux Soap in its 75 yrs journey as a product always used a Film Celebrity to promote the product with the most catchy lines „Lux meri Khubsurti Ka raaj“. They used a huge number of celebrities from the beginning to promote their product & in their 75 years celebration advertisement campaign; they used SRK as the main endorser who has said the famous „Lux mera Khubsurti ka raaj“ along with Hema Malini, Sridevi & Kareena Kapoor. That is the first time a male celebrity endorsed a female product in India. Recently SRK does another Lux commercial with his Jab Tak Hai Jaan co-star Katrina Kaif. In this ad, they endorse Lux Peach and Cream, and Lux Strawberry and Cream, and the fragrance of these soaps makes SRK 'bekaboo'.

Some Controversies

When SRK promoted Emami's Fair & Handsome cream. It was highly criticized as saying that if a star with SRK's stature promote whiteness cream then actually we are advocating for racism saying black is bad & white is gold. And how SRK could endorse such products as there will be a huge impact among the masses regarding the skin colors. A person must be judged by his/her qualities & not by his/her skin color. But what we basically forgot that stars get money to endorse products & we shouldn't eye washed by the advertisement & there is no point in criticizing a celebrity for endorsing product like Fair & Handsome.

Shilpa Shetty & Romanov Vodka: Shilpa Shetty also hardly criticized for promoting alcohol. As being a celebrity she must be a responsible citizen & a responsible citizen should never promote alcohol.

Celebrity branding is all right as long as the celebrity conducts himself in a good manner but if something wrong happens it will affect the image of the product also. When Salman Khan got warrant for killing endangered deer „Thumbs Up“ has no option but to replace him.

So the product and the celebrity remain good as long as both of them remain individually good.

The main problem of celebrity branding is that when a particular product is known to the

Conclusion

Celebrity endorsement market is currently booming in India and will continue to rise in the near future. But does this phenomenon really help in selling the product or the celebrity advertisement will just remain eye candy for the marketer because a celebrity can make the product familiar with the common people but at the end it will sell or not totally depends on the merit of the product. If the product is good, it will automatically sell and if it is not even the top ranked celebrity endorsement can't save the product.

So It is better to make a good product first and then go for the celebrity endorsement.

For instance if we take the example of Vodafone advertisements, we can see that from the beginning the

company uses an unique promotional strategy and without using any celebrity the Vodafone advertisements are highly popular in our country and it creates its own brand image becoming the 4th largest telecom service provider in India.

But seldom have we had such success story like Vodafone. The ultimate goal of the company is to sell their products and to sell their products it should be known to the common people and for that celebrity endorsement is needed to make the product familiar with the masses instantly. So celebrity branding in India will grow with the time creating an opportunity for the celebrities to earn millions in limited time by simply endorsing the products provided the celebrities will maintain a good image in the public. But the ultimate chooser will be the customers who will decide the fate of the products depending on their quality.

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