

Pros and Cons of Celebrity Advertising in India

Dr Saif Alam¹ Vineet Pathak² Shweta Srivastava³

Assistant Professor Ambalika Institute of Management and Technology, Lucknow

Assistant Professor Ambalika Institute of Management and Technology, Lucknow

Abstract

Advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation of ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor (Kotler). It is one of the strongest tools in the hands of marketers by way of which they use to communicate their product, services policies and various schemes to their consumers. In the recent years especially after liberalisation and arrival of multinational companies in India, the use of celebrities as the brand ambassador and endorser of various brands has increased immensely. A “Celebrity” refers to an „individual who is known to the public, such as actors, sport figures, entertainers“ and others of the like for his or her achievement in areas other than that of the product class endorsed (Friedman and Friedman1979). Celebrities attract the consumer attention towards the advertisement and also stimulate brand recall. They help the brands to become recognisable. The present paper tries to investigate various aspects of celebrity advertisement, its usefulness and relevance in the current time when consumers are bombarded with thousands of advertisements every day. The study also tries to find out factors to be considered by the marketers while selecting a celebrity for their brand.

Key Words: Advertisement, celebrity, brand,

Introduction-

Celebrity advertising is one of the most popular tools of promotion of goods and services. In today’s ever-increasing competition celebrity endorsement has become the major communication strategy of marketers by which they use to communicate their brand across the globe. Marketers spend enormous amounts of money annually on celebrity endorsement contracts based on the belief that celebrities are effective spokespeople for their products or brands (Katyal, 2007). Use of celebrities in advertisement has increased drastically in the last couple of decades. It has become a billion dollar industry in today’s era. (Katyal, 2007). In the present era of throat-cut competition, marketers are using all possible ways to reach their consumers such as Television, print media, social media etc. and as a result consumers are bombarded with number of advertisements. It is a big challenge in front of marketers to get attention of consumers. So they need something in their advertisement which can attract consumers and can hold them to watch the advertisement and celebrities are found to be best option in this regard. Because of having large number of fan following and well recognisable face they are able to hold the consumers and can motivate them to watch the advertisement and can persuade them to buy the product. Various companies are signing deals with celebrities in the hope that by using celebrities they can accomplish a unique and relevant position in the minds of the consumers. (Temperley & Tangen,2006). Today in India almost all kinds of products

from FMCG to Electronic goods and from Automobile to Banking and Insurance services, celebrities are used to endorse the brand. Bollywood actor and actresses and sport-persons especially cricketers have been the first choice of marketers for their brand. Amitabh Bachhan, Shahrukh Khan, Amir Khan, Priyanka Chopra, Katrina Kaif, Karina Kapoor, Aishwarya Roy Bachhan, Sachin Tendulkar, Mahendra Singh Dhoni Ranbeer Kapoor are being used not by one company but by many companies to endorse their brand. These celebrities are endorsing multiple brands and are paid huge amount of money for the same. CEOs/MDs of the company may endorse their own product.

Objective and Need of the Study:

In today's competitive world celebrity advertising has become a ubiquitous feature of marketing strategy and a necessity as well. The objective of the paper is to identify related advantages and disadvantages of using celebrities in advertisement campaign and also to identify the factors which are required to be considered before selecting a celebrity to endorse a particular product. The research paper will help the marketing managers to understand various aspects and issues related with celebrity advertising and it will also provide parameters to be considered before selecting celebrity for advertisement campaign.

Literature Review:

Using spokespersons to deliver the advertising message has become very common these days. Companies use various endorser in their advertisement and celebrity endorser is very popular type spokesperson (Tom et al. 1992). Celebrity endorsement advertising has been recognized as a "ubiquitous feature of modern day marketing" (McCracken 1989; Keller 2008). Furthermore, celebrity endorsement activity has been increasing over the past years (Biswas et al 2009). The main goal of using celebrities in advertising is to generate publicity and attention to the brand (Biswas, Hussain & O'Donnell 2009) as well as influence consumer perceptions of the brand stemming from their knowledge of the celebrity (Keller 2008). This requires that the celebrity must be well known in order to have the desired effect (Keller 2008).

Who are Celebrities:

Various definitions have been given by different authors. According to Friedman & Friedman(1979) "celebrity" refers to an „individual who is known to the public, such as actors, sport figures, entertainers“ and others of the like for his or her achievement in areas other than that of the product class endorsed. MacCracken (1989) illustrate that a celebrity endorser is a public figure who has great popularity representing a brand in the advertisement. Celebrity endorsement advertisement has been known as a ubiquitous feature of modern marketing.

Celebrity was a person whose name could grab public attention, arouse public interest and generate profit from the public (Gupta, 2009). Agrawal and Kamakura (1995) reported that about 20% of advertisement use one form or another of celebrity endorsement in their promotional strategy

Advantages of using celebrity in advertisement:

Hiring celebrity to endorse a brand is a costly business yet most of the companies are using famous and costly celebrities in their advertisements. Research has found that as compared to the other genre of endorsers such as the company manager, typical consumer and the professional expert, by far the celebrities are the most effective (Seno & Lukas, 2007). McCracken (1989) in his study found that a celebrity gives a form of cultural meaning which is later transferred to the brand association. This in turn improves the consumer's opinion of the advertised brand. Atkin and Block 1983 and Petty et. al (1983) in their study found that as compared to the non-celebrity endorsers, the celebrity endorsers produced more positive attitudes towards advertising and greater purchase intentions. Celebrities have the potential of helping the advertisements stand out from the surrounding clutter, guiding towards a improved communicative ability by cutting through excess noise in a communication process (Sherman 1985). Also one probable solution in the face of tarnished company image is the hiring of a celebrity to restore it. Kaikati (1987) expressed five advantages to employing celebrities to endorse products: drawing attention, crisis management, brand repositioning, global marketing, and boosting sales. Biswas et al. 2009 found that the reasons for recalling celebrities included popularity, status symbol, attractiveness and glamour, likeability and recall value or familiarity of the celebrities. Research has shown that the use of celebrities in advertisements can have a positive influence on the credibility, message recall, memory and likeability of the advertisements and finally on purchase intentions (Pornpitakpan, 2003; Pringle and Binet, 2005; Roy, 2006). Pope, Voges and Brown (2009) found that sponsorship positively affects an individual's perception of a brand's quality and image. Products that may be of inferior quality to their competitors, or have fewer features can benefit from using a high profile celebrity to pitch them to consumers. Erdogan, (1999) in his study found that Celebrity Endorsement assists in the image polishing of the company's image. He enlisted potential advantages and potential hazards of using celebrity in advertising campaign.

Potential Advantages	Potential Hazards
Increased Attention	Overshadow the brand
Image polishing	Public controversy
Brand introduction	Image change and overexposure
Brand repositioning	Image change and loss of public recognition
Underpin global campaign	Expensive

Source: Eradogan (1999). p 295

Potential disadvantages of Celebrity Advertising

Celebrity advertising is not free from risk, not only it is costly but various factors associated with celebrity are also get attached with product like- any negative publicity against the celebrity may harm brand image. Celebrity endorsers may now and then become a liability to the brand they endorse (Till and Shimp, 1998). It is believed that using celebrities can turn out to be an unnecessary risk, unless there appears to be a very logical relation between the endorser and the product. (Beverage Industry 1989, USA Today, 1995). Negative information and publicity regarding the celebrity is one risk associated with the use of celebrity endorsers. If the celebrity is strongly associated with the brand then the impact of the negative publicity will brim over to the product. (Till,1998). Many companies have been badly affected by the negative publicity accruing from the celebrity's misdeeds. One very prominent example is Pepsi which suffered with three tarnished celebrities - Mike Tyson, Madonna, and Michael Jackson. (Katyal, 2007). One major problem with use of celebrity is advertising campaign is that those who choose to use celebrities have no control over the celebrity's future behaviour. (Till & Shimp, 1998).

Another very big drawback of celebrity advertising is Overexposure. A celebrity use to endorse so many brands that sometimes it becomes difficult to recall which celebrity has endorsed which particular brand. Overexposure is a common occurrence between highly recognized and well-liked endorsers and highly competing brands and leads to making the consumer confused and unable to recall correctly which brand the celebrity stands for. (Tripp et.al., 1994) This not only compromises the value of the celebrity in the eyes of the star's fans but also brings to the customers notice the true nature of endorsements which is more compensation inclined and not so brand or product inclined. (Cooper, 1984, Tripp et al. 1994,). A general perception of consumers regarding overexposure is that they believe that celebrities use to endorse so many brands for money only. This has been referred to by Solomon et al. (2002) as the "hired gun" problem, where the spokesperson is perceived as endorsing the product only for the motive of money. Consumers even doubt that the celebrity rarely uses the product they actually endorse themselves. A review by King (1989) found that especially among young people the perceived credibility of celebrity endorsers has fallen drastically, with 64% believing that celebrities appeared in the ads only for money. Cooper (1984) suggests "the product, not the celebrity, must be the star."

Researchers have found that use of celebrity makes the advertisement interesting for consumers to watch. Their presence attract the consumers to watch the advertisement but universal concern here is that consumers will fail to notice the brand being promoted because they are focusing their attention on the celebrity (Erdogan, 1999). Thus the real objective of promoting brand gets missed because of presence of the celebrity. Agrawal and Kamakura (1995) recommend that there are decreasing returns associated with celebrities in advertising. Also some consumers have termed celebrities to be a 'puppet' used by companies implying that they perceive the celebrities to be lying, when endorsing certain products. (Temperley & Tangen, 2006) .

Celebrity Trap and Celebrity Credibility are two more shortcomings in using celebrity as endorser of the product. Celebrity trap is when the task to find substitutes becomes more and more difficult and thus celebrity becomes an addiction for the marketing team leading to surfeit of celebrities. Celebrity credibility refers to scepticism by the consumers regarding the celebrities, because of which brand is bound to be affected, especially when there is anything negative regarding the celebrity associated with the brand in the news. (Kulkarni and Gaulankar, 2005).

Finding Right Fit between Celebrity and Product/ Brand:

In wake of advantages and disadvantages of using celebrity, the crucial question is how to select the right celebrity to endorse a particular brand/product or what parameters should be consider while making a decision to choose a celebrity for advertising campaign. The choice regarding which celebrity should be used for promoting a particular brand is not an easy task. The choice depends on many factors including the type of product, objective of the campaign and type of target consumer. While visual cues and soft sell work for glamour-related products and low involvement products such as sodas, high involvement products such as consumer durables warrant more product information (Biswas et al. 2009).

Match – up Hypothesis:

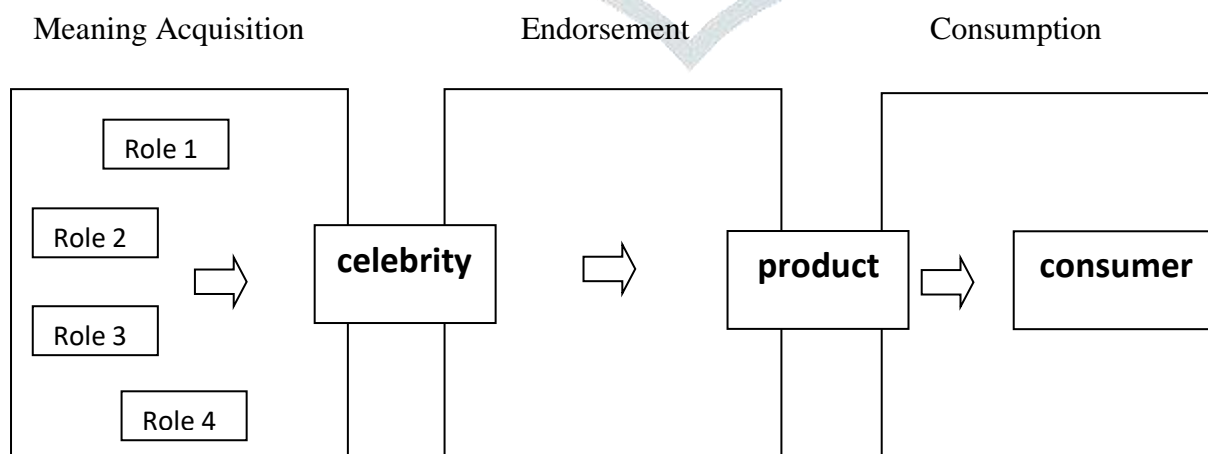
The importance of fit between endorser and product is known as “match-up hypothesis” (Till & Busler 1998). The hypothesis suggests that there should be a fit between the product and the celebrity who is endorsing the product. There should be congruence between the celebrity and the product in terms of characteristics such as image, expertise (Till and Busler, 1998, 2000) or attractiveness (Baker and Churchill, 1977; Kahle and Homer,1985). This congruency leads to greater believability and acceptance by the consumers. The image of the celebrity needs to match that of the product for increasing believability and building credibility, thus, validating the match-up hypothesis (Biswas et al. 2009).

Attractiveness and expertise are two most crucial factors to be considered before selecting a celebrity for endorsement. The celebrity-product match model states that attractive endorsers are more effective when promoting products (Kamins, 1990) and that an attractive celebrity helps attract the attention of the consumer towards the advertisement and the brand advertised. Kahle and Homer (1985) found that in the case of attractiveness related products the use of physically attractive celebrities increased message recall; product attributes, and purchase intention. Expertise is another very crucial parameter to select a celebrity. A celebrity who has sufficient expertise in the field of the product advertise may create more favourable attitude because consumers can trust their expertise to judge the product. Till and Busler (1998, 2000) have examined attractiveness versus expertise as a match-up factor and found that celebrity’s expertise in

an area was more effective than attractiveness when promoting a product or service specially in case of high involvement product purchase such as automobile. Kelman (1961) suggests that the reason behind the success of celebrity endorsement is two social processes – identification and internalization. Identification means consumers responds positively and conforms to the claims made by the celebrities because they believe that they are like these celebrities. Consumers conforms themselves with those celebrities. The second social factor is internalization, suggesting that consumers conform to the attitudes or behaviours advocated by others because they believe in the substance of the new attitude or behaviour (Friedman et al. 1979). Thus Following Kelman’s (1961) classification of endorsements, Friedman et al. (1979) suggests that attractive celebrity should be used for first type of consumer and this is best suited in low involvement purchases whereas knowledge and expertise of the celebrity matters more for second type of consumer and this is best suited in high involvement purchases.

The Meaning Transfer Model:

McCracken (1989) has addressed the endorsement process from a cultural perspective. He explains the effectiveness of the celebrity spokesperson by asserting the meaning consumers associate with the endorser and eventually transfers to the brand. McCracken suggests a meaning transfer model composed of three subsequent stages. In the first stage celebrity acquires meanings based on various factors like – age, gender, personality traits, life style etc. In the second stage meaning associated with the celebrity transfers from the celebrity to the product or brand s/he endorses. Thus the consumer perceives, meaning which was associated with celebrity, now associated with the brand or product. In the final stage consumers receives these meanings attached with the product while consuming the product. McCracken suggests that a famous celebrity may have a set of meanings associates with himself/herself and these set of characteristics provides support to the consumers while evaluating the presented brand Martin (1996, p.29)



Meaning Transfer Model (adapted from McCracken 1989)

Conclusions:

The paper concludes that there are a lot of advantages of using celebrities in the advertisement campaign, that's the reason which makes this promotional tool so popular that it seems impossible to imagine a marketing strategy without the use of celebrity as endorser. However this mode of promotion is not free from disadvantages and risks but carefully carved out celebrity advertising strategy, considering all the relevant factors and under right circumstances can justify the high cost associated with this form of advertising and can give good return on the investment. The study suggests various models like source credibility and attractiveness model, match – up hypothesis and meaning transfer model which should be considered before making a decision regarding celebrity endorsement.

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