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AUTHORS

Rajesh Kumar Srivastava

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Rajesh Kumar Srivastava (India)

Will multiple endorsements communication strategy by a celebrity work in educated consumer segment?

Abstract

Celebrities develop their own personality and image over a passage of time. When a consumer identifies himself with celebrity, identification occurs. If person is willing to accept influence from another person, he/she purchases the product in the hope of claiming some of these transferred meanings for their own lives.

However, if brand personality does not match with celebrity personality it may not lead to increase in purchase intention. Correct match between celebrity product fit could lead to better financial return.

The first phase consisted of the celebrity selection for the study and the selection of the brand endorsed by the celebrity, questionnaire design and data collection. The second phase, collected on the celebrity, was analyzed. In the third phase the data was collected on the brand endorsed by the celebrity.

Brand personality (BP) scale developed by Aaker (1997) was found out to be reliable and valid both for the celebrity and the brand. Thus, it supports the BP construct and its use in marketing research. Second, the study found support for the effect on celebrity personality and BP. Celebrity in 21st century extends for the traditional domain (Choi, 2010). However, it is recommended that celebrity should be selected carefully to match domestic and international users. This was also recommended by Lin et al. (2009). Celebrity endorsement is recognized as potentially potent tool in communication and influencing average consumer.

Keywords: multiple endorsements, celebrity, educated consumer, strategic communication.

Introduction

A lot of research has been done since seventies in celebrity endorsement. The practice of using celebrities in advertisements to promote products dates back even in BC as per Indian history and continue till date. Celebrities develop their own personality and image over a passage of time. When a consumer identifies himself with celebrity, identification occurs. If person is willing to accept influence from another person, he/she purchases the product in the hope of claiming some of these transferred meanings for their own lives. It is possible with the premise that celebrity endorsers positively impact consumer attitudes towards an advertisement and the associated brand, consumers' purchase intention, as well as other measures of effectiveness (Kaikati, 1987; Ohanian, 1991; Tripp et al., 1994; Goldsmith et al., 2000; Erogan et al., 2001).

Researchers have examined this transfer of celebrity meaning to the product and its resultant effectiveness by examining the source effect of celebrity endorsers.

Celebrity "trustworthiness" and "expertise" along with "attractiveness" exercised more influence on effectiveness than did the celebrity "credibility" source effect. Celebrities are individuals who enjoy public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement (McCracken, 1989).

This endorsement increases market acceptability and awareness, eventually creating sales momentum. Ce-

lebrity employment in advertisement campaigns is used as a signaling strategy to achieve visibility in product launches and as a persuasive tactic to lure and dazzle consumers. That is why a very important thing is to choose a proper celebrity to endorse the company's products.

Some studies have found out that as much as 25% of the total advertisements aired use celebrity endorsements (Shimp, 2000).

According to Solomon (2002), the reasons for using celebrity endorsement involve its potential to create awareness. Positive feelings endorsement is often perceived as entertainment. Because an individual is famous and considered a **celebrity**, he/she might not necessarily be an effective endorser.

Researchers have delved into various issues of celebrity endorsements, such as source credibility of the celebrity, celebrity brand congruence and meaning transfer model (McCracken, 1989). Research in brand personality (BP) is relatively new. The works of Aaker and Fournier (1995), Aaker (1997) and Durgee (1998) initiated the interest which ultimately resulted in the construction of BP scale by Aaker (1997).

However, researchers have not looked into the issue of *celebrity personality affecting the BP even in congruence studies*. Using a **celebrity** for endorsing a **brand** has become a trend in India (Patel, 2009). In this paper we try to address the issue of celebrity personality affecting BP. *This paper also studies how multiple brand endorsement by single celebrity influences the brand equity.*

1. Literature review

Till and Busler (2000) found that celebrity/product fit was effective for only certain measures of effectiveness, such as brand attitude, but not for other measures, such as purchase intention. Regardless of the impact celebrity/product fit has on effectiveness; the absolute weight of the existing literature suggests that the phenomenon should play an important role in celebrity endorser effectiveness (Till and Busler, 2000). However, if brand personality does not match with celebrity personality it may not lead to increase in purchase intention. Correct match between celebrity and product fit could lead to better financial return. According to McCracken (1989), celebrity's effectiveness stems from the cultural meanings with which they are endowed. His thesis is that the endorsement process depends upon the symbolic properties of the celebrity. Distinctions of status, class, as well as personality and lifestyle types are represented. An endorsement succeeds when an association is fashioned between the cultural meanings of the celebrity world, on the one hand, and the endorsed products, on the other.

2. Importance of celebrity endorsement

Advertising of a celebrity endorser (Erdogan, 1999), integrity and believability of a celebrity endorser (Erdogan, 1999; Morgan and Hunt, 1994) conceptualized trust as "confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity." Celebrity trustworthiness certainly represents a critical issue for advertisers.

One commonly used strategy is included to celebrity endorsers in advertisements (Erdogan, Baker, and Tagg, 2001; Lin, 1993; Solomon, 2007). In fact, advertisements with celebrities account for approximately 20% to 25% of all advertisements (Agarwal and Kamakura, 1995; Stephens and Rice, 1998; Spimp, 2000). Among the most popular celebrity endorsers are athletes, coaches, and other sports personalities (Bush, Martin, and Bush, 2004). Celebrity athletes are demanding increasingly large sums of money to lend their name and image to products, and earned over \$897 million for endorsements in 2001 (Agarwal and Kamakura, 1995; Sports Business Journal, 2002). In many cases, athletes earn much more for endorsements than they do in their sport career. For example, LeBron James signed endorsement contracts for over \$90 million with Nike and Upper Deck trading cards before he was even drafted by a professional basketball team (CBS News, 2003). Perhaps the most mentioned example is Tiger Woods, who in 2000 signed a five-year contract extension with Nike, valued at over \$105 million, and in 2002 extended his five-year contract with Buick for an additional \$40 million (DiCarlo,

2005). Extension of the contract itself signifies the impact of celebrity on the brand personality and sales. Celebrity endorser personality should reflect and match the brand personality.

2.1. Celebrity/product fit. The celebrity/product fit, also called the "match-up hypothesis", refers to the harmony of the match between the celebrity endorser and the product being endorsed (Till and Busler, 2000). Celebrity/product fit is thought to function as a key determinant of endorsement effectiveness (e.g., Friedman et al., 1978; Friedman and Friedman, 1979; Kahle and Homer, 1985; Kamins 1989; 1990; Kamins and Gupta, 1994; Erdogan and Baker, 2000; Till and Busler, 2000; Erdogan et al., 2001; Batra and Homer, 2004). Celebrity effectiveness varies across different product types. This needs to be studied in detail before selecting a celebrity. *This paper explores such possibility and thus improving ROI (return on investment).*

2.2. Benefit of celebrity endorser. Using celebrities as endorsers can be an effective strategy to gain and hold consumer attention (Atkin and Block, 1983), enhance message recall (Friedman and Friedman, 1979), increase believability of the advertisements (Kamins, Brand, Hoeke, and Moe, 1989), and create positive word of mouth communications (Bush et al., 2004). Celebrities also can help improve brand attitude (Friedman and Friedman, 1979; Kamins et al., 1989; Petty, Cacioppo, and Shumann, 1983), increase purchase likelihood (Friedman and Friedman, 1979; Kamins, 1989), and increase brand loyalty (Bush et al., 2004). However, if BP and image are different than celebrity personality/image may not lead to expected results. Mowen, Brown, and Schulman (1979), who used balance theory at Heider (1958) to describe the relationships between the endorser, the brand, and the target audience and asserted that an endorser would be most effective when there is a close relationship between all three elements. According to the match-up hypothesis, an endorser will not have a beneficial effect on consumer attitudes and behavior unless the image of the endorser is "match-up" with the image of the brand (Kahle and Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1990; Paresh and Kanekar, 1984).

2.3. Multiple endorsements by celebrity. Backham's potent combination of sporting prowess, multifaceted masculinity makes him a model endorsement prospect for many global companies (Yu, C.C., 2005). Both the congruence studies in celebrity endorsements (Friedman and Friedman, 1976; Kamins, 1990; Mittelstaedt and Riesz, 2000) and the meaning transfer (McCracken, 1989; Langmeyer and Shank, 1993) studies have hinted on the congruence or transfer of attributes from the celebrity to the brand endorsed. *However, multiple endorsements by celebrity*

with certain personality on brand image and personality has not been studied in detail. How demographic profile of consumer could affect the personality of brand and celebrity needs to be studied? Education could play an important role in acceptance of celebrity endorsement. Earlier studies (Srivastava, 2008, 2009) mentioned that education could create a differentiation in consumer thinking.

3. Theoretical construct

Celebrity endorsements become a relevant field of research in India in a view of many companies following the path of enlisting celebrity. Important stream of research is the celebrity brand congruence studies. The congruence studies have delved into the similarities or correspondence between the product or brand and the celebrity which is popularly known as the “match-up” hypothesis (Kamins, 1990; Kamins and Gupta, 1994; Kirmani and Shiv, 1998; Misra and Beatty, 1990; Mittelstaedt and Riesz, 2000). Prior research suggests that whether an endorser truly is an expert it matters little. Instead, these results confirm that what matters greatly is whether consumers perceive them as experts (Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999). Gauging the meaning, consumers associate with a product is challenging.

According to Atkin and Block (1983), there are two main reasons why celebrity endorsers have gained so much popularity. First, they are traditionally viewed as being highly dynamic, having both attractive and likeable qualities. Secondly, their fame is thought to attract attention to the problem.

3.1. Credibility of the celebrity. Credibility is defined as celebrities’ perceived expertise and trustworthiness. Since celebrity endorsements act as an external cue that enable consumers to sift through tremendous brand clutter in the market, the credibility factor of the celebrity greatly influences the acceptance with the consumers.

3.2. Celebrity-brand/personality fit. This principle state that the success of the brand-celebrity collaboration heavily depends on the compatibility between the brand and the celebrity; these are some of the collaboration.

3.3. Consumer education level. Education brings rationality in thinking. Higher education may not make consumer follow blindly (Srivastava, 2010). Left brain overcomes the right brain thought process. This could play an important role in bridging the gap between blind follower and rational follower. It could also help him to judge the degree of trust and expertise of a celebrity endorser. Non-acceptance of Fiamo Soap and the new comer star Dipika combination by middle class consumer could be due to this factor.

3.4. Theoretical construct. The following theoretical construct can be formulated (Figure 1):

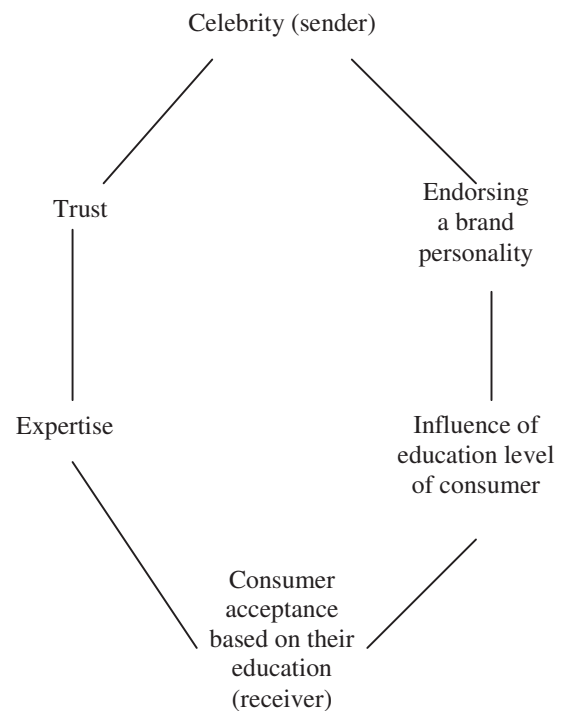


Fig. 1. Theoretical construct

The possible acceptance of celebrity endorsing a brand through creation of trust and expertise could be influenced by education level of consumer. Celebrity brand fit could be more rationalized and not just accepted due to celebrity being an endorser.

Keeping the above theoretical construct based on four variables like trust, expertise of celebrity education level of consumer and BP, the objectives for this research were to find out whether multiple brand endorsement by a single celebrity endorser will affect BP? Brand-celebrity/personality fit – do they matter in multiple endorsements?

Some personality dimensions exist for the celebrity and the brand endorsed respectively. We have tried to see whether celebrity personality has an effect of brand personality and its acceptance by consumer. If they are not accepted it is because of education.

4. Hypothesis

Celebrities develop a personality through the types of role they play in society. Endorsement could increase the brand presence in the market and improve purchase intention. However, acceptance of consumer could be influence by education and BP. Celebrity-brand and personality fit is a must. Therefore, multiple endorsements may not work, as each product has its own personality. Many brands are endorsed by single endorser. Amitabh Bachhan, a well know celebrity, endorses brands like Nokia, Reid and Taylor (textile to oil, etc.).

H₀: Multiple endorsement by a celebrity will work irrespective of BP. When celebrity endorser is selected to represent a firm, sales and brand image can be significantly bolstered (Magnini et al 2008).

H₁: Multiple endorsements by a celebrity will not work, as consumer is more educated and rational in their thought process.

H₂: Celebrity-brand/personality fit is a must in multiple endorsement of a celebrity. The personality of a celebrity will have a positive impact on the personality of brand. Brand/celebrity personality misfit could lead to wastage of brand image perception.

Celebrity/product fit could play role in advertising effectiveness (Amos et al., 2008). At the same time according to Koerning et al. (2009) anonymous athletic is more effective endorser compared to celebrity.

5. Methodology

Research was carried at management institute and post graduate students were selected for this study. Three groups of students of management participated in this study. They were asked to measure the personality of the multiple brand endorser celebrity – Amitabh Bachhan (actor), in the first part of the study. Amitabh Bachhan is a star icon and is well known across Asia and the world. This was the main reason for selecting him. Brand Amitabh Bachhan has a 90%+ awareness levels amongst Indians.

Each group consisted of thirty students. Ninety students participated in this study. 120 students who are doing MBA were divided into groups based on their product usage. They were selected from 237 students. They were asked to determine BP by using Aaker’s model of CRESS personality for their respective brand usage. 4 brands endorsed by Amitabh Bachhan were selected for the study.

The justification of using student sample is from the fact that they are exposed to the media, and thus to celebrity advertisements. Secondly, at their age the celebrity becomes more of an idol or role model. Thus, student sample was supposed to fulfill the study objectives. Respondents were of age group between 21-28 years. Most of the respondents (1991) were dependent on the parent’s income. They were explained the meaning of BP and perceived quality dimensions. Study took three months and was conducted in Mumbai financial capital of India.

5.1. Questionnaire. The items to identify personality of the celebrity as well as the brand were selected from the fifteen facets given in Aaker’s (1997) study. The data was collected using semantic differential scale.

5.2. Data analysis. The **first phase** consisted of the celebrity selection for the study and the selection of the

brand endorsed by the celebrity, questionnaire design and data collection. In the **second phase** collected data on the celebrity were analyzed. In the **third phase** the data, collected on the brand, endorsed by the celebrity.

6. Results

Amitabh Bachhan as a celebrity endorser and his 4 brands were taken for the analysis. Consumer analysis of 30 each group selected on random basis was selected. They were users of the brand selected for study. Each consumer of 30 was asked to give weight age on Aaker personality measurement to Amitabh Bachhan personality and brand they are using. Mean score was calculated followed by Pearson correlation in order to assess personality fit. This is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Brand and celebrity/personality fit test on J. Aaker personality parameters

Brand	N	X ² test	Remark	Correlation test
Cadbury chocolate	30	164.385	At 16 degree of freedom value is 26.296. Amitabh Bachhan and Cadbury are closely associated	0.845496815
Parker pen	30	91.167	At 16 degree of freedom value is 26.296. Amitabh Bachhan and Parker are closely associated	0.699379
Reid and Taylor textile	30	61.905	At 16 degree of freedom value is 26.296. Amitabh Bachhan and Reid and Taylor Parker are closely associated	0.961269
Boro plus	30	171.21		-0.36918

Celebrity endorsement is recognized in communication and campaigns tend to visualize the meaning of celebrity in relation to the brand (Caroll Angela, 2009).

Boro plus a cream for cuts and wound showed negative correlation and is not compatible with brand Ambassador Personality. Thus, it is suggested that multiple brand endorsement may not work if personality fit is not measured and mapped. This is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Personality mapping with Boro plus

Personality dimension	Amitabh Bachhan mean	Rank	Boro plus mean	Rank
Competence	12.7	3	6.73	3
Rugged	3.3	5	15.33	1
Exciting	7.3	4	5.87	4
Sophistication	18.7	2	12.87	5
Sincere	15.3	1	4.87	2

Beckham’s multiple iconic images have influence on a portfolio of brands and have positive correlation. It means that marketers have chosen the right brands with right celebrity. At the same time even in adversity of Beckham the brand identity and image were not affected (Vincent J. et al., 2009).

Star power among celebrity seems to enhance image of the Brand in the public eye (Marciniak Dana, 2009). Over exposure, however, is the major issue, with celebrity Amitabh endorsing too many products. His face has promoted products in categories as diverse as beverages, paints, financial services, garments, automobiles, stationery, food supplements, personal care, real estate, batteries, televisions, chocolates and jewelry. Moreover, he has a “guest appearance” in P&G’s commercial for its detergent brand Tide. Nevertheless, marketers claim to be happy having him endorse their brands. Thus, multiple endorsement of brand may not work by a single celebrity if his personality does not match with the brand personality. This can try to earlier findings.

Conclusion

Celebrity endorsement plays the role of the signaling strategy and is increasingly employed across various industries regardless of the product type. The billions of dollars spent per year on celebrity endorsement contracts show that celebrities play an important role for the advertising industry. Nowadays many companies choose to use celebrities as endorsers for their advertising campaigns. Brand personality scale de-

veloped by Aaker (1997) was found out to be reliable and valid both for the celebrity and the brand. Thus, it supports the BP construct and its use in marketing research. Second, the study found support for the effect on celebrity personality on brand personality. Celebrity in 21st century extends for beyond the traditional domain (Choi, 2010). However, it is recommended that celebrity should be selected carefully to match domestic and international users. This was also recommended by Lin et al. (2009). Celebrity endorsement is recognized as potentially potent tool in communication and influencing average consumer.

Managerial implication

Case of a new brand, care should be taken before going for the celebrity endorsement, because there may be a transfer of some personality attributes from the celebrity to the brand which is unwanted by the marketer.

Scope for future research

Gender analysis on the role of celebrity endorser on brand personality could have given interesting observation. A linkage to purchase intention could have given better prospective.

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