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Examining the Influence of Celebrity Brand Ambassadors on Consumer Behaviour

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Abstract

Advertisements featuring well-known actors, musicians, athletes, and other public figures tend to be more effective and more likely to be remembered by consumers. Once a direct connection has been made between a celebrity and a brand, however, any unfavourable publicity surrounding the celebrity might trickle down to the product(s) being supported. The goal of this research is to examine how celebrity-brand congruence and publicity affect customers' perceptions of the celebrity and the brand, as well as their propensity to make purchases based on those perceptions, using the S-O-R model and the balancing theory. A consumer's opinion towards the celebrity and the brand/product as well as their propensity to make a purchase, are significantly influenced by the degree of congruence between the two. Therefore, it is crucial for retailers to put more time and energy into researching celebrity endorsements that are a good fit for their brand's image.



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Keywords: attitudes; buying intention; celebrity-brand congruence; millennial; publicity

1. Introduction

Many brands are increasingly turning to the use of celebrities and mascots in their advertising and marketing campaigns. This is done for a variety of reasons, including increasing brand awareness, making the product more approachable, strengthening the consumer's emotional connection to the brand, and facilitating product recall. This research intends to take into account the value of celebrities and mascots for brands, and it will examine the role that celebrities have in swaying customers' decisions across product categories. When a famous person endorses a product, consumers are more likely to buy it because they will think of the endorsed brand when they think of the product in question. The desire to fit in with the "right" crowd by donning "right" clothing, "right" drinks, and "right" scents is one possible explanation. A consumer's perceived value of an approved product is greater than that of a comparable product that is not recommended (Clark & Horstman, 2003). Products with a big client base and a high price-production cost margin are more likely to benefit from celebrity endorsement. In a nutshell, running shoes, soft drinks, and other items with wide price-cost margins are more likely to get celebrity endorsements than those sold locally or to a specific niche market.

Celebrity endorsements on television have a significant influence on sales in India since celebrities have widespread adulation and admiration in the country, serving as role models for many Indians. Cricket players, Bollywood stars, and other sports figures are among the growing number of celebrities used by Indian businesses as brand ambassadors. Branding mascots as product endorsers is common practise for many businesses, especially those dealing in fast-turnover consumer goods. Marketers invest heavily in celebrity endorsement deals on the assumption that famous people would make compelling advocates for their goods (Katayal, 2007). People of all socioeconomic backgrounds watch TV at alarmingly high rates. Film stars and cricket players, for example, have been able to not only garner enormous public attention, but also increase company sales volumes, making them good measures of celebrity power in India. When Cadbury and Nestle's brands were having trouble in India, they enlisted the help of Bollywood

superstar Amitabh Bachchan to boost sales. Sales of Cadbury and Nestle went up after the endorsement quickly won back consumers' hearts (Joshi & Ahluwalia, 2008; Matrade, 2005). In order to reach and persuade people in semi-urban and rural areas to buy "Chota Coke," Coca-Cola employs the services of Aamir Khan. Celebrity endorsing products has shown to be an effective way to sway people. Similarly, Shah Rukh Khan, Sachin Tendulkar, and other celebrity endorsements have been shown to influence customers' choices (Joshi & Ahluwalia).

Advertisements featuring celebrities are often considered a "omnipresent feature of contemporary marketing" (McCracken, 1989). One-fourth of all commercials have a celebrity spokesperson endorsing a product or brand, making it a widespread occurrence (Shimp, 1997). This proves that this approach works as a technique of persuasion. Advertisers often enlist the help of famous people to humanise their products (Kaikati, 1987). Atkin & Block (1983) and Petty & Cacioppo (1983) discovered that endorsements from celebrities elicited more favourable reactions to advertisements and higher buy intentions than those from ordinary people. Furthermore, McCracken discovered that famous people endorsing products is a powerful means of conveying meaning. Assael (1984) and Solomon and Assael (1987) argue that the symbolic apparition reference group connections of celebrities make them powerful endorsers. The usage of famous people in commercials is common since they increase brand awareness. They're supposed to help people pay more attention to the ad, make the product more glamorous, and increase the ad's credibility and memorability (Spielman, 1981). Attracting attention, crisis management, repositioning the brand, international promotion, and increasing sales are only five of the benefits listed by Kaikati (1987) of using celebrities as product endorsers.

Trip and Carlson (1994) looked at how celebrities' endorsements of different products affected consumers' decisions. According to the results of his research, the more goods a celebrity supports, the more adversely consumers see the endorser and the advertisement. It was hypothesised that when a celebrity endorses more than four items, their credibility and likeability, as well as their attitude towards the commercial, may diminish.

Mathur, Mathur, and Rangan (1997) find that his client businesses' market-adjusted valuations rose by over 2%, or more than \$1 billion, due to the expectation of his return to the NBA and the corresponding rise in his visibility. This research shows that a celebrity endorser with a high profile and a penchant for rumour and speculation may have a significant impact on sales of the items they promote.

Third-party endorsement, event sponsorship, and brand popularity are all examples of extrinsic advertising cues that have been studied by Dean (1999) in relation to their effects on brand and manufacturer evaluation. Of these, only endorsement has been found to significantly affect product variables (quality and uniqueness) and one image variable (esteem). Therefore, the approval of an impartial party may serve as a signal of the high quality of the advertised goods. Both endorsement and sponsorship were shown to have significant main effects, with endorsement influencing evaluations of quality, originality, and esteem and sponsorship influencing solely evaluations of citizenship. There is no substantial interaction between the three cues, and the popularity cue has a weak main impact.

The influence of endorser and corporate credibility on advertising credibility, brand credibility, and buy intent was studied by Goldsmith et al. (2000). One hundred fifty-two adults who saw a fake commercial for Mobil Oil were polled on their impressions of the brand. They assessed the ad's credibility in terms of the endorser's credibility, the company's reputation, the audience's attitude towards the ad and the brand, and their desire to make a purchase. It was found that the credibility of the endorser had the most effect on how people felt about the commercial, while the credibility of the corporation had the greatest effect on how people felt about the brand. Independent of the equally important function of endorser credibility, the results imply that corporate credibility plays a significant influence in consumers' responses to advertising and brands.

Daneshvary and Schwer (2000) found that people place a high value on the credibility of the source when making decisions about whether or not to believe anything. If the source is trusted, the consumer will take the correct influence

(knowledge) to heart and use it. As a result, the credibility of the source endorsing the product might have an effect on consumer decisions.

Some viewers are so distracted by the celebrity's charisma that they fail to take note of the product being sold, as was discovered by Zafer et al. (2001). Research conducted by Sanyukta et al. (2005) on the benefits and drawbacks of celebrity endorsement of brands indicated that having a celebrity endorse your product increases consumers' confidence in your product. This is particularly true for novel items. By standing out from the crowd, celebrities make the company and its advertising more obvious to the intended audience. The overuse of a celebrity may be seen as "lazy advertising," in which the lack of quality material is covered up by the presence of the celebrity. The worry of brand-celebrity disconnect emphasises that if the celebrity stands for ideals that are at odds with the brand values, then the advertising will likely cause confusion among the company's intended consumers.

According to Agarwal et al. (2005), a consumer's brand attitude is their overarching impression of the brand based on their assumptions about the brand. These ideas revolve on the theoretical and experiential merits of the product. An effective endorser is one who can raise consumer interest in a brand either directly or indirectly. Certain characteristics of a celebrity endorser, such as their likeability, knowledge, trustworthiness, and likeness, make them a credible and trustworthy source of information, as shown by Surana (2008).

Shimp (1998) investigates the possibility that unfavourable publicity around an endorser might affect sales of the products they promote. Practitioners of celebrity endorsement believe that the goodwill their target audience has for the recommended celebrity will rub off on the endorsed brand. When bad information about a celebrity becomes public, either during or after an advertising campaign, what steps should be taken? Publicised scandals involving prominent celebrities (such as Pepsi Cola's association with Mike Tyson, Madonna, and Michael Jackson) imply that endorsers should be treated with caution. An upsurge in the usage of cartoon characters as paid product endorsers has been seen. It was found that 28% of animated commercials included well-known cartoon characters like Mickey Mouse and Bugs Bunny, who are protected from unfavourable press.

When customers turn on the TV or go online, they are inundated with commercials for both well-known and obscure companies. Having so much competition for customers' attention makes it harder for brands to stand out (Rodgers & Thorson, 2000). Celebrity endorsements have been used to sell goods and services for decades, and now they make up a sizable chunk of the marketing industry (McCracken 1989). Advertising via online social networks with the help of celebrity endorsers has become an essential part of marketing strategy and is more effective than any other mass medium (Li et al., 2012). According to previous studies, celebrity endorsements make up as much as 25% of all TV ads and 10% of advertising expenditures (Erdogan et al., 2001). Elberse and Verleun (2012) found that between fourteen and nineteen percent of American commercials incorporated celebrity endorsements of items or companies. Using well-known people in marketing has been linked to increased sales and brand awareness in the past. Celebrity endorsements are used by businesses because they increase the credibility of commercials and raise brand awareness among consumers (McCracken 1989). The usage of celebrities is a powerful marketing tool that may boost a company's brand recognition and sales (Ranjbarian et al., 2010). That's why it's important for consumers to be able to put a face to a brand (Till and Busler, 2000; Thomson, 2006).

As Till and Shimp (1998) and White (et al., 2009) point out, however, if a direct relationship has been made between a celebrity and a brand, unfavourable information about the celebrity may reflect on to the endorsed brand. Tiger Woods, a professional golfer, was implicated in one of the biggest celebrity scandals of 2009 (Hawkins et al., 2012), which likely affected the brand images he sponsored. Many of his endorsement agreements were negatively impacted by the press surrounding his adultery. Tag Heuer and Nike both supported Tiger Woods back then. Tiger Woods' endorsement relationship with Tag Heuer was terminated, in contrast to Nike's decision to stand by the golfer (Hawkins et al., 2012). Nike reported a loss of \$1.7 million in revenue and over 105,000 consumers as a direct result of the incident (Edwards, 2010). Since celebrities are often seen as attractive and likeable, they can be used effectively as a promotional strategy; however, when there is negative publicity on the celebrity endorser, it may affect the consumer's attitudes towards the brand negatively (Thwaites et al., 2012).

1.1 Millennials

Because of their considerable buying power and market participation, millennials are an interesting demographic to examine (Giovannini et al., 2015). Because of these considerations, the market for all stages of life has been altered by this generation (Morton, 2002). Millennials, who are mostly the offspring of the Baby Boomer generation, cover the ages of 20 and 36. According to estimates, millennials account for 76 million customers with an annual buying power of \$600 billion (Kennedy, 2001). Generation Y is the biggest generational cohort in the United States, and its members are also known as Echo Boomers and Nexters (Morton, 2002). Generally speaking, millennial consumers have less discretionary money than baby boomers due to the fact that they are still young and the majority of them have just recently joined college and the employment. The employment market was more competitive for this generation since they had the highest education (Morgan Stanley, 2016). Market smart and brand sensitive, this generation of consumers has come of age in a media- and consumption-driven environment (Bolton et al., 2013). Even as they get older, millennials "love to shop" (Lee and Cosenza, 2002) and their disposable income will only increase. In addition to making up 33–35 percent of all retail purchasing, millennials are also strong consumers of mobile devices, particularly smartphones and tablets (Barton et al., 2014).

One of the most powerful advertising strategies is the use of a famous person to sway viewers' opinions and motivate them to make a purchase. Roth Capital Partners found that 78% of Millennials are less influenced by celebrity endorsements and more influenced by peer-to-peer marketing on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube (Chadha 2017), as reported by eMarketer. Nonetheless, Millennials are more likely to pay attention when they follow celebrities on social media who recommend things (McCormick, 2016). This is because Millennials often try to model their appearance after that of celebrities they look up to. If advertising including celebrity endorsers are relatable to the target market, the audience is more likely to make a purchase of the endorsed product (Lippe, 2001). Retailers that wish to expand their customer base should study the millennial generation since they represent a sizable and relatively well-off demographic. Because of their considerable purchasing power, businesses

are keen to understand as much as they can about this age group. Among this group, college students make up the youngest age bracket. Many stores aim their marketing efforts towards college students due to the demographic's purchasing power, propensity to establish trends, brand loyalty, early product uptake, and expectation of improved living conditions after graduation (Wolburg & Pokrywczynski, 2001). In the Millennial generation, today's freshmen are the last to enrol in higher education. College students of the Millennial generation are an interesting subset to examine because of their distinct purchasing habits and favourable views of online shopping (Arnaudovska et al., 2010).

1.2 Celebrity Endorsement

As the needs and expectations of customers increase, so do the efforts of marketers to find new and innovative ways to connect with those consumers on an emotional level. Thus, there has been a rise in the use of celebrity endorsements in advertising, since these techniques are known to evoke strong emotional responses from customers, hence influencing their preference for a certain company (Sami, 2006). According to one definition (Schlecht, 2003), a celebrity is "a person who has achieved a high degree of public recognition and acclaim." They stand out from the crowd due to unique qualities (be they physical appearance, a remarkable way of life, or exceptional abilities) and are well known and respected as a result. Actors, TV personalities, models, sports, musicians, and artists are just a few examples of the many types of celebrities that exist. Famous people have a lot of influence on the sales of the products they support because of their fame. They become identified with the item they support and with their earlier achievements. In most cases, the celebrity is able to persuade the intended audience. In highly competitive markets, the attractiveness, attention, and memory of brand communication messages presented by celebrities and renowned individuals is greater than that of messages delivered by non-celebrities (Davies and Slater, 2015).

Furthermore, many people look up to celebrities and want to emulate their ideals and way of life (Sami, 2006). According to Frazer and Brown (2002), consumers make a conscious decision about which celebrity beliefs and behaviours to adopt. Celebrity admirers who feel they lack confidence may try taking on the

demeanour of their favourite star. This might include mimicking their manner of speaking, appearance, method of communication, and even the products and services they like (Sami, 2006). These actions demonstrate why celebrities are so crucial to current advertising campaigns. Previous studies have shown that celebrities may have a beneficial influence on consumers' purchasing decisions, product preferences, and even their dietary and exercise habits (McCracken 1989; Till and Busler 1998). In the United States, female consumers are more susceptible to the persuasive power of celebrity endorsing products than male consumers are (Howard, 2002). According to research by Pingle and Binet (2005), Millennials are the most likely generation to follow celebrities and buy the food, booze, and clothing they promote. Compared to Baby Boomers, Millennials are four times more likely to be affected by celebrities, according to a study (Barton et al., 2014).

1.3 Celebrity-Brand Congruence

Consumers generally believe the celebrity should have high positive affect and recognition, and the celebrity's image should match that of the product (Choi and Rifon, 2012), so the correct selection of the right celebrity is crucial for the success of the advertisement, as insisted by most advertisers. Famous athletes like Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, David Beckham, and others are often used to promote sports apparel and equipment, rather than Hollywood actors. Consistency between the endorsed celebrity and the advertised brand or product is crucial to the success of an endorsement campaign (Choi and Rifon, 2007). According to research by Davies and Slater (2015), endorsements are more credible and campaigns more successful when there is a good fit between the product and the celebrity. Matching products and endorsers that are culturally compatible increases the likelihood that customers will purchase the endorsed brand. Also, numerous studies suggest that a celebrity has a bigger influence on customers than a non-celebrity spokesperson does in terms of attitude and buy intention (McCormick, 2016). The majority of customers see their friends and family as more reliable sources of information than salesmen (Erdogan 1999; Choi and Rifon 2007; Escalas and Bettman 2017), and many view celebrities as friends even if they may not know them personally.

At first look, it could make sense that a good association between a celebrity and their endorsed brand would occur if there was a significant connection between the two. In addition, favourable responses to advertising in terms of attitude and purchase intent are amplified when the celebrity is a good fit for the brand or product, when the celebrity/brand combination is regarded to be relevant or congruent (Till and Busler, 2000; Batra and Homer, 2004). An alternative hypothesis (such as the possibility that some degree of incongruence may have a beneficial influence on reaction to advertising, especially non terms of the brand image) may be considered and tested, though. A little discrepancy between what was expected and what was received might be seen as intriguing and even favourable (Lee and Thorson, 2008). Individuals may be stimulated to study the information more thoroughly and elaborate more if there is a relatively poor match between the brand and the celebrity (Lee, 2000).

1.4 Publicity of Celebrity

While positive information about celebrity endorsers can have a positive effect on consumers' attitudes and beliefs (Thwaites et al., 2012), negative information about celebrity endorsers can have a negative effect on consumers' attitudes and beliefs. It is worth noting that the goal of using a celebrity endorsement is to increase interest in the endorsed product by capitalising on the target market's favourable perceptions of the endorser. When the celebrity is engaged in publicity that alters or harms his or her reputation, it poses challenges for the brand. The public's opinion of the endorsed brand may shift as a result of this development. Previous research has shown that negative information is more powerful than equivalent positive information in influencing one's thoughts and judgements. It has been shown that negative information is more easily forgotten than neutral information (Baumeister et al., 2001). Negative information about a celebrity endorser has a big influence on consumer decisions because of how people respond to it. Therefore, it has become more challenging for marketers to handle the unfavourable press around their celebrity endorsers as the usage of social media and the availability of information has expanded (Solomon et al., 2009).

1.5 Consumer Attitude toward the Brand and Celebrity

A person's attitude is their evaluation of things like commercials, products, and social concerns. Attitude is a persistent and general judgement of people, things, etc.; it may be influenced by marketing activities like television advertising and celebrity endorsement (Solomon et al., 2012), but it usually displays consistency over time. Attitudes may be formed and altered by both internal and external influences. In this case, unfavourable publicity and brand congruency inside the commercials may have an effect on customers' attitudes. Marketers anticipate that by associating a well-known figure with their product, consumers would develop favourable opinions about the endorsed product (Choi and Rifon, 2007). Negative publicity surrounding celebrity endorsements might have the opposite effect of what was intended (Choi and Rifon, 2007). For instance, if buyers already have an unfavourable impression of the recommended celebrity, that perception is likely to extend to the brand itself. Attitude is frequently brought up while discussing celebrity sponsorships. As a rule, people already have strong opinions on which celebrities they find credible, competent, trustworthy, and beautiful enough to utilise as persuadable tools in commercials. Consumers are more likely to trust an endorsement from a well-liked celebrity because they are more likely to see the endorser as a reputable source of information (Surana, 2008).

1.6 Consumer Buying Intention

After weighing the pros and negatives of a product, buyers often form an opinion on whether or not they want to make a purchase (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000). The chance that a customer will make a subsequent purchase of a product depends on the customer's need for the product, the customer's level of familiarity with the product, the customer's assessment of the product, and the customer's perception of the manufacturing firm and brand (Bradmore, 2004). Consumers are more likely to make a purchase if they enjoy the product and the company behind it (Chaudhary and Asthana, 2015). Consumers' levels of purchase intent may range from high to low depending on the information available to them and how they feel about the goods in question. When consumers have a strong want to buy a thing, they are more likely to do so. The opposite is true when their desire to buy is weak. Price (Alford and Biswas, 2002), consumer sentiment (Johnson and

Russo, 1984), and brand loyalty are just a few of the factors that might affect a consumer's propensity to make a purchase. In order to make informed decisions about the products they want to buy, consumers often look to their past encounters with such products (Bradmore, 2004). Once armed with sufficient information, consumers may begin weighing their available options and making educated purchases. Consumers' desire to buy is a common metric used to predict their actions.

2. Conclusion

According to the equilibrium theory, a state of equilibrium exists when the three valences (publicity, attitude towards the celebrity, and desire to purchase) are all positive. There will be a significant shift in consumer sentiment if a negative sign is created in any one of the triad's three components. However, this research only looked at two of the numerous elements that influence customers' decision to make a purchase. Consumers' propensity to make a purchase is affected by a variety of other factors. Therefore, additional research is needed to better understand the relationship between consumers' attitudes and purchasing intent by including other potential variables (e.g., fashion involvement, media exposure, celebrity scandal, and source credibility) and possible moderating variables (e.g., personality traits and celebrity-consumer connection).

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