

## CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT AND IT'S EFFECTIVENESS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Deepti Goel\*

### ABSTRACT

*India is the land of celebrities where people love and worship their favorite celebrity star be it film stars, sports persons, politicians or even animated characters. People idealize them and want to be like them, live like them and create influence like them. They derive their identity from them by taking them as their reference group. These celebrities are hired by the marketers for endorsing their products because people listen to these celebrities. When a famous star endorses a product it is believed that people will show higher attitude and purchase intention. This paper focuses on the concept of celebrity, celebrity endorsement and its effectiveness on various variables like sales, profits, brand perception, attention, recall etc. This is a review paper based upon previous research on the topic. Objectives of this study are to understand who is a celebrity; and what impact it creates if a celebrity is used for endorsing the product. This study is believed to give deep insights on the area of celebrity endorsement and its effectiveness so that future scholars can further explore this area as it has been found that not much studies have been done on celebrity endorsement in India. Finally the paper is concluded with findings and suggestions based upon the review done.*

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**Keywords:** *Celebrity, Celebrity Endorsement, Celebrity Endorsement, Celebrity Marketing, Influential Marketing.*

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### Introduction

Celebrities rule the modern world. Be it kids, teenagers or adults everyone has their own favourite star from movies, fashion, sports, politics etc. People connect so much with these celebrities that marketers try to reap benefits from these connections which people feel with the celebrities. Marketers use celebrities to endorse the products. Celebrities are considered as such positive characters and are used extensively in product endorsement activities (Jain et al., 2011). In an attempt to communicate the merits of their product or brand, marketers have often chosen to use endorsement as a promotional strategy (Kamins, 1990). Advertisers often use celebrity endorsers in their advertising as a way to persuade and influence potential buyers of their product or service (Dwivedi and Johnson, 2013). The use of celebrity endorsements in advertising is on the increase (Money et al., 2006). With this in consideration, it is not surprising that the celebrity endorsement phenomenon has attracted increasing attention from academics and practitioners over the last three decades (Roy, 2012).

This paper focuses on this concept of celebrity, celebrity endorsement and its effectiveness on various variables like sales, profits, brand perception, attention, recall etc. This paper is divided into five sections. First section explains the introduction about the topic, need and objectives, and research methodology used. Second section explains the meaning and concept of celebrity. Third section elaborates why celebrity endorsement is so influential. Fourth section gives detail literature review about the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. Finally the last section is of conclusions where limitations and research and managerial implications have been discussed.

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\* Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Commerce, University of Delhi, Delhi, India.

### **Need and Objectives of the Study**

Celebrity endorsement is an interesting field of knowledge in modern day marketing world. It is widely used in advertising due to its appeal and capability to attract large audience. Though these days everybody is exposed to celebrity endorsement but the conceptual knowledge about who a celebrity is, why he is so influential is not known to general masses. When we talk about academics, effectiveness of celebrity endorsement is required to be studied in depth.

Therefore, this study aims to understand who is a celebrity. This paper also aims at discovering what celebrity endorsement is and why people get influenced by celebrities. Finally, this study also looks into the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in terms of various parameters like sales, profits, attention, recall etc.

### **Research Methodology**

This is a review paper based upon secondary sources of data like journals, articles and internet blogs. Authentic work of researchers and academicians from all over the world has been referred here. Literature is collected online from the e-library of Aryabhata College, University of Delhi. This work is based upon my understanding and authentic works of various researchers and academicians.

### **Who is a Celebrity?**

Celebrities are people who have attained public recognition and who often have distinctive attributes such as attractiveness and trustworthiness (McCracken, 1989 and Silvera and Austad, 2004). Celebrity endorser generally includes movie and television stars, models and individuals from sports, politics, business, art and the military worlds (McCracken, 1989). Similarly, the celebrity spokes characters (for example cartoons), like their human counterparts have also served as product endorsers and the anthropometric characters can be considered as another type of celebrity endorsers (Hsu and McDonald, 2002). However, Bednall and Coolings (2000) have excluded cartoon characters as endorsers from their study.

Friedman and Friedman (1979) have defined celebrity endorser as "an individual who is known to the public (i.e., actor, sports figure, entertainer, etc.) for his/her achievements in areas other than that of the product class endorsed". On the other hand, Pringle and Binet (2005) have mentioned that a genuine celebrity has a clearly defined personality and reputation. They are known to be extremely good at something special beyond appearing in advertising. It is their outstanding skill in their chosen field of endeavour which has brought them into the public eye and made them an object of veneration and respect.

McCracken (1989), has defined celebrity as "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement". His definition is useful and most widely used because when celebrities are depicted in marketing communications, they bring their own culturally related meanings thereto, irrespective of the required promotional role (Erdogan, 1999).

### **Celebrity Endorsement: Celebrity's Role as a Reference Group**

Using a famous celebrity for endorsing the product is known as celebrity endorsement. Marketers widely use celebrity endorsement strategy because people take celebrity as a reference group. A reference group means any person or group of persons that serve as a point of comparison (or reference) for an individual, by communicating values, attitudes and providing a specific guide for behaviour (Shiffman and Kanuk, 2006 in Roozen, 2008). An aspiration group is also a kind of the reference group where the consumer does not belong to the group but wants to be associated with it. To become 'associated' with this group, consumer wants to behave like members of that aspiration group (De Pelsmacker et al., 2004 in Roozen, 2008).

Assael (1984) in Menon et al. (2001) has suggested that celebrities are effective endorsers because of their symbolic inspirational reference group association. Reference groups provide points of comparison through which the consumers evaluate attitudes and behaviour. Although they may not become any celebrity, they may still symbolically want to be identified with this group by purchasing the product recommended by that celebrity. Therefore, celebrity advertising is effective because of their ability to tap consumers' symbolic association to aspirational reference groups.

The role of the celebrities is getting important due to their huge influence on almost everywhere in any marketing field (Donavan, 2013 in Kim, 2018). Celebrities have built-in images and followers, both powerful influencers to potential consumers (Ford, 2018). Atkin and Block (1983), have presented two

reasons why a famous endorser may be influential. First, celebrity spokespeople are viewed as being highly dynamic, with both attractive and likeable qualities. In addition, their fame is considered to attract attention to the product or brand (Kamins, 1990).

### **Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement in Terms of Various Parameters**

Celebrities are known for being perfect at something beyond appearing in advertisements, and their superb skills in their related fields brings them into the public eye and make them objects of veneration and respect (Pringle, 2004 in Jain et al., 2011). This section of the paper aims at studying the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement strategy in terms of various parameters as below:

- **Financial Impact (Purchase Intentions, Sales, Profits and Returns)**

Agrawal and Kamakura (1995), and Mathur et al. (1997), have found positive impacts on the economic returns of companies using celebrity endorsers by using Event Study Methodology, which has been used in order to identify the valuation effects of marketing decisions (Mathur et al., 1997). Both studies' findings have emphasised on the effectiveness of use of celebrities as endorsers (Erdogan, 1999). Agrawal and Kamakura (1995), have documented a more positive stock price reaction to the announcement of the celebrity endorsement contract. Using event study methodology, they have examined the impact of 110 celebrity endorsement contracts on expectations of firm profitability.

Mathur et al. (1997), have examined the impact of Jordan's impending return to the National Basketball Association (NBA) on the profits of firms with products endorsed by him within the framework of event study methodology. Using event study methodology, they have provided very compelling evidence that a major celebrity endorser has the potential to profoundly influence the profitability of endorsed products and brands.

Farrell et al. (2000), have studied the impact of endorsement by Tiger Woods on Nike returns. They found that the Nike excess returns are strongly linked to the performance of Tiger. They have mentioned that the excess returns were result of the additional publicity that Nike had received when Tiger was in contention to win. Since Tiger used to wear Nike apparel when he competed on the Tour, Nike reaped the benefit of increased exposure every time when he received his television coverage. This additional benefit was in excess of the initial increase in excess returns which were associated with the announcement of that sponsorship agreement (Farrell et al., 2000).

Till and Shimp (1998), have also found that market value impact continue well beyond the announcement effects associated with the signing of the contract. Also, it is to be noted that at certain times even a celebrity is chosen first and then a new product is designed around the person since this strategy can pay huge dividends by giving product instant personality and appeal (Dickenson, 1996 in Erdogan, 1999). Gardner and Shuman's (1986) have revealed that 53 percent of the respondents made a purchase as a result of a sponsorship (Daneshvary and Schwer, 2000). Rafique (2012), has noted from the study that celebrity endorsement has reasonable impact on purchase intentions.

In a recent study, respondents have felt that athletes-players influenced them to make purchasing decisions and hence they will make a purchasing decision just because the product has been promoted by a certain celebrity (Dugalic and Lazarevic, 2016). Therefore, marketers all through the world use celebrities to endorse their products and brands to influence the purchase behaviour and increase sales of the endorsed product and brand (Francis and Yazdanifard, 2013; Ahmed et al., 2015; Freeman and Chen, 2015; Dugalic and Lazarevic, 2016; Nasir et al., 2016 and Ford, 2018).

- **Attitude towards the Brand**

Celebrities have been used to promulgate new brand images, reposition brands and introduce new ones along with promoting well established brands (Erdogan and Kitchen, 1998 in Erdogan, 2005). Celebrity have been found to define and refresh brands; create aspiration for brands; and celebrities have been found to add new dimensions to brands (Erdogan, 2005). If a company image gets tarnished, hiring a popular celebrity is one potential solution (Erdogan, 1999). Ang et al. (2006), has also found that celebrities can change the personality of even a watch.

Potential advantages of celebrity endorser are that it can polish the image of the brand, especially when a brand is introduced in the market or a repositioning of a brand will take place (Roozen, 2008). Rafique (2012), has noted from the study that celebrity endorsement has reasonable impact on customers on their attitude towards the brand. Roozen (2008), has also mentioned that research has shown that celebrity endorsement influences the feelings of the consumers and also influence the attitude consumers have towards the advertisement and the attitude towards the brands.

Saleem (2007), has mentioned that empirical finding regarding measuring consumer response to celebrity endorsements in advertisement shows that celebrity does make advertisements more believable (Kamins et al., 1989). It also create a positive attitude toward the brand (Kamins et al., 1989). Celebrity endorsers have been found to enhance brand image, and brand awareness. Celebrities have built-in images and followers, both powerful influencers for potential consumers (Ford, 2018). These sort of influential powers have a huge impact on the brand association (Francis and Yazdanifard, 2013). Importantly, a study has discovered a strong and positive correlation between celebrity endorsement and brand awareness (Ateke et al., 2015). It has been proved that celebrity endorsement has a major and significant role in enhancing the brand awareness and brand image (Nasir et al., 2016). Therefore, the proliferation of celebrity in advertising testifies to the fact that advertisers have bought the idea that celebrities can add value to their brands (Muda et al., 2017). Overall, the findings support the contention that celebrity endorsers produce more positive attitudes (Freeman and Chen, 2015).

- **Attention and Recall**

Celebrities have been found to get attention and better memorability for the ad (Cooper, 1984; Plapler, 1974 in Misra and Beatty, 1990, Roozen, 2008). Research has also shown that because of the fame of celebrities, they do not create and maintain attention of the consumers only but they achieve high message recall also (Ohanian, 1991; O'Mahony and Meenaghan, 1997 in Roozen, 2008). Hunt (2001), has also mentioned that the advantages of using a celebrity are that they can increase attention to and memorability of the ad and product. Saleem (2007), has mentioned that celebrity does make advertisements more believable (Kamins et al., 1989). It also enhances message recall (Friedman and Friedman, 1979).

Wei and Lu (2013), has compared the influence of celebrity endorsements to the influence of online customer reviews on female shopping behaviour. The results have revealed that search good endorsed by a celebrity in an advertisement evoked significantly more attention from the customers. In general, the results have indicated that the usage of a celebrity leads to a longer viewing time of the advertisement (Widmer and Heah, 2018).

- **Transfer of Cultural Meanings**

Frequently used advertising tool for transferring cultural values to any product is celebrity endorsement. Van (2004), has reviewed that Dyer (1988), has suggested that endorsers can communicate cultural values such as feelings, social meanings and values like power, authority, subordination, sexuality and so on. Dyer (1998), in Van (2004), has mentioned that some expressions can be read and understood cross-culturally, but in order to understand fully the function and meaning of affective displays, one needs to refer to particular context or social situations within any culture. Advertisements need to be communicated swiftly, clearly and economically; therefore, the consumer is confronted with devices like facial expressions, poses and movement that tend towards stylization and generalization. Given the great popularity of professional athletes, numerous companies tend to tie their brands to athletes in order to transfer the athlete images onto the brand (Donavan, 2013 in Kim, 2018). Recently, a study (Scheidt et al., 2018) has given empirical support for meaning transfer between the celebrity and the brand.

- **Breaking the Clutter**

Most studies have suggested that the most important reason which drives the firms to go for any celebrity endorsements is to stand out of the clutter (Roy, 2012). Advertisers face a daunting task nowadays. They want to reach consumers with useful, life-enriching communications about their products and brands. But choosing the right channel to carry their messages is not easy. This is because the media environment is too cluttered (Muda et al., 2012).

Muda et al. (2012), have recommended that advertisers do need to find a unique way to break through the ad clutter in order to be effective in their communications. They have to keep audience motivated enough to pay attention to the ads and then, engage in higher order processing of ad messages. One of the popular and effective strategies of creatively breaking through this clutter is by using celebrities to endorse the company's brand and product in the advertisement (Muda et al., 2012). Atkin and Block (1983), have argued that because of their high profile, celebrities may help advertisements in standing out from surrounding clutter, thus improving their communicative ability (Erdogan, 2005). The choice of celebrities has become common practice for brands endorsement in today's cluttered media environment (Dzisah and Ocloo, 2013). To help their ads stand out, advertisers are turning to celebrities to endorse their brands and companies (Muda et al., 2017).

- **Breaking the Cultural Prejudices**

Erdogan (1999), has reviewed that some of the most difficult aspects of global marketing to grasp are host countries' cultural 'roadblocks' and prejudices such as time, space, language, relationships. Celebrity endorsements act as a powerful device to enter foreign markets. Celebrities with worldwide popularity can help companies to break through such roadblocks very easily. Pizza Hut International increased its global market share by utilising the global celebrities such as supermodels Cindy Crawford and Linda Evangelista, and Baywatch star Pamela Anderson (Erdogan, 1999). Toyota's 2002 global ad campaign with the world known actor Brad Pitt is also a good example (Erdogan, 2005).

- **Others**

Louie et al. (2001), have mentioned that the primary reason that firms hire celebrity endorsers is that famous individuals have "celebrity equity" (e.g., awareness and associations) that can be transferred to the brand. Lin (2011), has compared the effectiveness of celebrity with the expert and found that celebrities are more effective than the experts in recommending a cell phone product. Compared with an expert, a celebrity is always more attractive and favoured by consumers.

Celebrities have been found to be truly the most influential icons that people admire (Francis and Yazdanifard, 2013). It has been found that celebrities endorsed advertisements are more attractive than the non-endorsed advertisements (Ahmed et al., 2015). It has become clear that the use of celebrities to endorse a marketing offer creates a very favourable influence on the consumers and it creates a connection which forces the consumer to patronize a product (Dzisah and Ocloo, 2013).

Celebrity endorsement has been found to bring more glitz towards the retail brand's marketing strategy (Francis and Yazdanifard, 2013). Celebrity endorsers can enhance advertisement credibility and liking. Celebrities have built-in images and followers, both powerful influencers to potential consumers (Ford, 2018). Ang et al. (2006), has also found that celebrities can change the personality of even a watch. Marketers have endorsed celebrities with their products and brands in the advertisement to change the perception of the viewer's regarding their brand (Ahmed et al., 2015).

### **Conclusion**

This section starts with general discussion about the findings and then various limitations and issues have been discussed. Finally various managerial and research implications have been as discussed.

### **Discussion**

This study provides basic insights into the meaning of a celebrity. Celebrities are people who have attained public recognition and who often have distinctive attributes such as attractiveness and trustworthiness (McCracken, 1989 and Silvera and Austad, 2004). Marketers widely use celebrity endorsement strategy because people take celebrity as a reference group. It has been found that celebrities are effective endorsers because of their symbolic inspirational reference group association. We have found that celebrity endorsement has positive impact on purchase intentions, sales, profits, brand attitudes, attention and recall. Also celebrity endorsement helps in standing out of the clutter. When celebrities are used as endorser, cultural meanings are transferred easily and in effective manner. This justifies the attempt to further explore this area. Celebrity endorsement is vast area and it requires empirical studies even in India.

### **Limitations and Issues**

First and most important limitation of this study is that this is not an empirical study. It is a conceptual work based upon researches of other researchers. Time constraint is another factor which limited my study to a certain extent. Another problem is nonexistence of much literature on this aspect in India so I had to confine my study to U.S and Europe only. But this study provides a foundation work by peeping into the basic aspects like who is a celebrity and the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. It opens up the doors for future research in this very interesting but still unexplored area.

### **Implications**

This research suggests that there is ample scope for marketing practitioners to improve their marketing strategy by adopting celebrity endorsement. Celebrity endorsement has proven to increase sales, brand awareness, attention, recall breaking through the clutter. But further studies are required to explore how to choose the right celebrity for a particular product.

Most of the studies on celebrity endorsement have been conducted outside India. Therefore, the studies can be replicated in Indian scenario as well. In India people are so much influenced by celebrities that we may expect different results in Indian scenario.

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