



Review Paper

Brand positioning through celebrity endorsement in an Indian perspective

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Abstract

The Celebrity endorsement is considered as an effective brand positioning strategy between the marketers and consumers. Marketers are spending huge sum of money in hiring celebrities for positioning their brand, so that their sale could increase and the consumer can become more familiar with the brand. The paper deals with the impact of celebrity endorsement is affected by the number of factors or endorser qualities such as Exposure, Fame, Popularity, Credibility, Expertise, trustworthiness, Attractiveness, Similarity of celebrity with consumers, Liking and Physical attractiveness of celebrity, Familiarity of celebrity, the association between brand image and celebrity image and various positive and negative impacts of celebrity endorsement are discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Celebrity endorsement, positioning, choice of celebrities, positive and negative impact, brands.

Introduction

In this competitive marketing world every brand and product want to expand a periphery over their competitors. To attain this chore, the brands/products are trying its best to attain the position and to sustain their image in the mind of customers. Brand or product positioning is an effective communication strategy and is the key to success in today's competitive market, where many brands are competing in the same category/ place for their position in the market. To attain this position the manufactures are utilizing their valuable time and money to endorse their brands or products, and occupy an enduring sustainable position in the minds of the ultimate consumers. Celebrity endorsement in the field of advertising is a well-known strategy worldwide by many companies to sustain their brands in the market. Celebrity endorsement through advertising is a popular, yet challenging form of marketing communications.

In Indian perceptives, the growth and development of television media for celebrity endorsement is the most fashionable and effective means of the mass communication in the field of marketing. There are more than three million television commercials and ads being aired every year. Conversely, 80 percent of the commercial ads are forgotten by the people in a day, therefore it's imperative for the marketers to ensure that their ad campaign should be attractive, different and should stand out amongst the crowd of competitors¹. The concept of celebrity endorsements was well stated by Friedman and Friedman², Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann³ in their studies that through endorsing the celebrities for a brand, it established to build up a better recall or recognition of a brand name and image.

Literature review

In advertising context, credibility is often associated with a model or an endorser, Friedman and Friedman⁴, Patzer⁵, Ohanian⁶, the advertiser, the advertisement, Mac Kenzie and Lutz⁷, corporate credibility, Lafferty and Goldsmith⁸, Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell⁹, Newell and Goldsmith¹⁰, or web credibility, Choi and Rifon¹¹. Speck, Schumann and Thompson¹² underlined that celebrities are those individuals who are renowned to the public due to their accomplishments in areas such as sports, entertainment, politics, broadcasting, corporate and etc. Moreover, celebrity endorsement activity has been increasing over the past years, Biswas, Hussain and O'Donnell¹³.

In India, celebrity power can rightly be assessed by their successful endorsements. Brand endorsements by celebrities is a widespread phenomenon in India and worldwide. The popularity, size and reach of the celebrities has the power to influence the attitude and behaviour of millions of people, particularly the people in India. Here, celebrities have not only been successful in gathering huge public attention, but also in increasing sales volume of the brands. For example, Cadbury used Amitabh Bachchan to promote the brand when it went through a bad phase in India. Later in the ad recreated the people's love for the brand and increased Cadbury's sale in the chocolate market, Joshi and Ahluwalia¹⁴, Matrader Chennai¹⁵.

Another example is of superstar Aamir Khan, endorse Titan to communicate the message that Titan watches are as trustworthy as the actor is in his films. Likewise, various endorsements done by the great superstar Shahrukh Khan, master blaster Sachin Tendulkar and others popular stars have been found to be

flourishing in affecting consumer buying decision, Joshi and Ahluwalia¹⁴. Katyal¹⁶ asserts that there is the presence of great impending for celebrity endorsement in India is truly relevant, by this means it is inducing customers to purchase the product. Additionally, he also states that celebrity power in India can be recognized by the victorious endorsements done by Shahrukh Khan for three brands namely Santro, Clinic Alclear and Pepsi.

Objective of the Study

In India, the renown and popularity of celebrities are idolized as powerful identity, therefore the marketers are always trying their best to connect with the people emotionally with the power identity of famous celebrities. In this concept the paper deals with the various aspects of brand positioning through celebrity endorsement which affect the image and value, and the various positive and negative about the concept of positioning for a product/ brands through celebrity endorsement.

Basic Criteria for the Productive Choice of Celebrities

Exposure, Fame and Popularity of Celebrity: Famous celebrities like Shahrukh Khan, Amitabh Bachchan and MS Dhoni they all have endorsed more than 25 products and they have a comparatively larger frequency of advertisements on TV as compared to other celebrities. Erdogan¹⁷ reported that the symbiosis between the image of the celebrity and the associated brand can improve the brand image. The exposure value of the celebrity can affect the likeability of the advertisement and this builds up positioning of the brand/product and this makes the prospects to remember the product.

Credibility of Celebrity: Credibility is “the level to which the beneficiary sees the celebrity as having relevant knowledge, skills, experience and moreover trusts the celebrity that he/she gives unbiased, objective information”, Belch and Belch¹⁸. Hovland et al.¹⁹ underlined that the most significant element of credibility of celebrities are expertise and trustworthiness. Mostly the celebrities are seen as rational sources of significant information, Goldsmith et al.⁹ and the credibility of a celebrity is explicated as the entirety quantity of positive characteristics that create and also amplify the acceptance of the information, Erdogan¹⁷.

Expertise: In case of expertise of the celebrity, it is not so important that the celebrity should be or really an expert in the field. Rather than its more important that consumers should think and believe that a celebrity who have endorsed the brand has the expertise, Ohanian⁵. For instance, when Sachin takes up a cricket bat and explain what he looks for – like balance and stability and use the analogy to promote the MRF tyres.

Trustworthiness: Erdogan et al²⁰ described that trustworthiness means “the honesty, integrity and believability of an endorser”. Trustworthiness factor is the most imperative aspect with regard

to the credibility of a celebrity, moreover, another factor likeability is the most important element of building trust, Friedman, 1978. Therefore, Friedman, Santeramo and Traina²¹ explained that the advertisers and manufacturers can create the uppermost effect by taking into account these two factors, such as liking and trustworthiness of the celebrity, because it is assured that when consumers like a celebrity, then they will trust a celebrity.

The Attractiveness of Celebrity: Erdogan¹⁷ illustrated that attractiveness also entails concepts such as intellectual skills, personality properties, way of living, athletic performances and skills of endorsers. The physical attractiveness of celebrity determines the effectiveness of influencing power, as an outcome of that consumers wants to be like the endorser or a celebrity and wanting to identify themselves with that endorser or a celebrity, Cohen and Golden²².

Similarity of Celebrity with Consumers: Erdogan¹⁷ also elucidate that people can be influenced more easily by an endorser who is similar to them. If the celebrity and the consumer have common factors of similarity such as interests or lifestyles, it would create better cohesiveness. The celebrities are endorsed by marketers upon their characteristics that match well with consumers’ preference. Companies also try to create empathy using celebrity endorsement, Belch and Belch 2001. Through empathy, manufacturers are trying to create a strong attachment among the celebrity and consumer.

Liking and Physical Attractiveness of Celebrity: McGuire²³ portrayed likeability as “affection for the source as a result of the source’s physical appearance and behaviour. Additionally, states that when people are affectionate towards celebrity they will also like the accompanying brand that is the reason why the marketers are endorsing the celebrities in commercials and advertisements.

The Familiarity of Celebrity: Erdogan¹⁷; Belch and Belch, 2001 emphasized that familiarity is the believed similitude is the understanding that a celebrity possesses through exposure. It is most important that when the companies and marketers select a celebrity for the endorsement of the brand or product, at that particular time marketers should find out the familiar of consumers with the celebrity. If the consumers are more familiar and exposed to a celebrity, and then they like a celebrity; this process known as the mere exposure effect as suggested by Zajonc²⁴.

The Match-up between Brand Image and Celebrity Image: Cooper²⁵, Forkan²⁶ their study shows that it is more important to have match-up congruence between the celebrity endorser and the product. Misra²⁷ exemplify that the match-up signifies the perceived fit for the product and the image of the celebrity. When a celebrity image is good, moreover, it fit with the product, then this lead to more believability and effectiveness for the brand.

Evolution and Growth of Celebrity Endorsement in India

The famous Hollywood actress Joan Crawford, Clara Bow and Janet Gaynor were among the first celebrities to promote and to endorse the products, Fox²⁸. The concept celebrity endorsement in Indian market, one of the most famous brand is Lux. Since its commencement it has used beautiful celebrities to promote the brand by using tagline "Filmi sitaron ka saundarya sabun" (beauty soap of film stars). In 1941 Lux signed the first Indian actress Leela Chitnis to endorse the soap, Chunawalla²⁹. In 80's there was a growth of celebrity endorsement in Indian market. There was a gesticulate of celebrity endorsement with filmy stars like Tabassum for Prestige Pressure Cooker, Jalal Agha for Pan Parag brand, Kapil Dev for Palmolive Shaving Cream and Sunil Gavaskar for Dinesh Suiting, they all started endorsing in the illustrious brands.

Every celebrity symbolizes or represents some values and meanings. For example, we can say that Sachin Tendulkar symbolizes with his hard work and sincerity in his field. Similarly, superstar Shahrukh Khan stands for success, status, power and control and these attributes permeate into the brand, which he endorses. Amitabh Bachchan and Aamir Khan as an endorser have helped several brands to get out of controversies and reposition. Though, trustworthy celebrity endorsements marketers have started providing a competitive edge by gaining attention and creating interest to see the advertisement for their brands. Celebrities' endorsement helps to differentiate the product and also add to brand recall and they also act as a brand positioning tool. Miciak and Shanklin³⁰ distinguished their work that, the brand and celebrity relationship can develop the attachment and trustworthiness among the consumers. If the celebrity who has endorsed the product or brand is popular or more familiar among the people, it becomes more possible that consumers will be ready to buy the endorsed product.

The survey, titled 'Celebrity Track' made a survey in that Amitabh Bachchan ranked as the number one celebrity followed by Sachin Tendulkar and Shahrukh Khan and amongst female celebrity endorsers Kajol and Aishwarya Rai got higher scores, Singh³¹. Another good example in the study of Mahanta and Pande³² in their paper the significant of relationship between the endorser and the brand, where famous Bollywood couple Ajay Devgan and Kajol their endorsement of the Whirlpool is backed by extensive consumer research to confirm their fit with the brand both have attributes in their relationship as well as in their individual personality. For Instance, Whirlpool has values such as equality, love and romance and both Ajay and Kajol have these in abundance. Moreover, they are from the same field and have done well in their career.

Positive Impact of Positioning through Celebrity Endorsement

With the increase number of product and brands in the market it has become very difficult to differentiate the brand from the

competitors. The increased consumer power over the retention of brand over other brands in the market has made many companies to make advertising more challenging. Sherman³³ highlighted that the celebrities have the potential to make the advertisements stand out from the surrounding clutter, and also guiding towards an improved communicative ability by cutting through the excess noise in a communication process. Brand awareness is the positive impact of the endorsement, Huang and Radder³⁴ describes brand awareness as the first and critical stage in the process of moving and attracting consumers to buy a product and finally to develop a brand preference.

Negative Impact of Positioning through Celebrity Endorsement

The disadvantage of celebrity endorsement could harm the value and image of the brand, and this lead to wrong positioning of the brand in the eyes of consumers. Negative information regarding the celebrities is one of the most influencing risks that create more problem for the marketers while endorsing the celebrity for their products. If the image and frame of celebrity are strongly connected with the brand or the product, so the blow of the negative publicity will ruin the image of the product or brand, the market and also give the wrong impression about the particular brand to the ultimate consumers. One most excellent example is a Pepsi brand which suffered with three tarnished celebrities - Mike Tyson, Madonna, and Michael Jackson, Katyal¹⁶. Another factor explained by Tripp et.al.³⁵ is the overexposure, which is a common occurrence between highly popular and liked endorsers and highly competing brands, which leads the consumer confused and unable to recall the brand, for what the celebrity has endorsed.

Conclusion

Celebrity endorsement is an effective tool for brand positioning and to introduce new product in the market, moreover, to differentiate the brand from others. To sustain in the market and to differentiate from competitors, marketers are using celebrity endorsement through advertisement, a style that is highly attractive and powerful source for endorsing the product or brand. Over the past few years there is an increase and growth in the number of celebrity endorsements for brands. Marketers are also acknowledged that the power and popularity of celebrities have influenced the preference and purchasing decisions of the consumers. Moreover, celebrity endorsement in the positioning of a brand, especially in the Indian context is very important and also the need of the hour, the practice of the celebrity endorsement for positioning a brand can be an effective competitive source in differentiating the brands from competitors and gaining a market space over its competitors. The right choice of celebrity for endorsement of any brand is effectively done, then it makes the brand stand out, galvanizes brand recall power for consumers and facilitates instant awareness about the brand. Thus, the marketers should sustain their brand in the market through celebrity fame, popularity, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, of the celebrities.

These characteristics of celebrity could be able to develop the brand and would help to capture new prospects and retain/sustain the existing prospects in the market.

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