

Customer Endorsement In-Vogue!

'Does celebrity sponsorship have any impact on a firm's bottom line?'- Professor Victor Stango

Ms. Jyoti Kukreja

Research Scholar

USMS, GGSIPU

Delhi, India

E-ID: jyoti.kukrejajk@gmail.com

Abstract— Customer Delight is supreme to all the objectives of a business firm. They ensure not only business and pride but glamour to the organizations. When customers are the actual patrons to an organization then why should the focus rest on celebs? The shift in psychology from celebrity to customer endorsement is not only to save cost but facilitate brand-engagement. The face-book generation that is greedy for fame must be offered its share in the most enchanting way. The adoption of brands and advertisement through celebs has one vivid theme: stardom. The rationale kick-started due to the mismatch between the celeb hired for endorsement of the brand. The public found it hard to believe that the celeb themselves used the same brand that they advertised. This is because the image that is created by media and the one that is glamorized by the perceived value of the brand had an unbalanced tangent. With salary to acquire and sustain cars, will they use bikes? How can one believe that Hrithik Roshan drives bike when he can easily afford a sedan? This paper is an attempt to explore the customer-centric philosophy where skin-care brands as Dove and other durable products as SUV-Hero Honda Bikes feature in the advertisement, the *raison d'être*, the benefits it unfolds and the scope of such strategies.

Index Terms—Mutual Fund, Fund Manager, Close Ended, Open Ended

I. INTRODUCTION

Does association with only the 'famous' can help connect with customers? Fame means money, both for the celebrities themselves and for the businesses they choose to partner with; celebrities can be the steroids of business performance. In the short term, they can dramatically impact sales but in the long term, the consequences can be uncertain and possibly ruinous for organizational health. Time it right and sign up a celebrity just as the public is falling in love with them, and it can turn you into a stock market wizard. From publishing to supermarkets, sporting equipment to management consultants, businesses face the conundrum of how to make the best of celebrities.

The high advances paid by publishers and the saturation of the celebrity market have led to the wretched situation in which not only is there not much money left for works by non-celebrities, but there isn't much left for new celebrities either.

Which celebrity is not immune to large financial incentives? Venture Republic, a business and brand strategy firm, has established three basic questions a company should bear in mind before signing up celebrities.

- Are they attractive: do they look good; are they intelligent, successful and charming?
- Are they credible - are they trustworthy and expert in the product they are promoting?
- And is there a transfer of meaning between the celebrity and the brand?

There has to be some compatibility between the product and the celebrity.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF CELEBRITIES

Celebrities are indisputably important and valuable to brands, especially in the luxury/ fashion segments. They wield enormous power in fashion circles and can contribute to making and breaking brands. Fashion designers pamper them and brand managers recognize their potential to brands and utilize this effectively. Celebrity endorsement does not however begin and end with shooting and printing the photo of a beautiful model in a fashion magazine. There are several factors and dimensions involved in choosing a celebrity to endorse a brand. It is however worthwhile to understand what the true value of celebrity endorsement is.

First step is to identify celebrities in the eyes of the target customers. Celebrities are people those who exert significant influence in several facets of society, ranging from arts, music, movies and television, sports, culture, politics and even religion. They range from film and television stars to musicians, sports personalities, royals, even socialites who have no defined careers. In the fashion world, the list of celebrities would include designers, models, photographers, and any prominent person involved in the artistic aspects of fashion such as make-up artists and fashion consultants. The celebrities that are most utilized in the promotion of luxury fashion brands are those in the film and music industries as a result of the major role that fashion plays in these entertainment sectors.

According to recent research statistics, the number of celebrity advertisements has increased manifold. The reasons that these personalities are used in brand communications include making the brand's message stand out among the clutter of advertising from competitors and convincing customers of the credibility of the brand's offerings. In addition to these, celebrity endorsement is important to luxury brands for the following reasons.

1. Celebrity endorsement is a great brand awareness creation tool for new luxury brands.
2. Endorsement by celebrities helps to position and re-position existing brands.
3. Celebrities contribute to sustaining a brand's aura.
4. Celebrities are used to revive and revitalize staid brands.
5. Celebrities generate extensive PR leverage and opportunities for brands.
6. Celebrities are used to create global brand awareness.
7. Celebrities promote a brand's products and appeal.

There are several ways that celebrities can be used to either endorse a luxury fashion brand or show an association with the brand. The classic and most widely utilized method is the paid-for media advertisement mostly found in fashion magazines and on television. This is where a celebrity is photographed or filmed with an often appealing product of the brand in question. The themes of these advertisements often vary but the underlying message is uniform and that is an indication of a direct connection between the brand, its products and the celebrity.

III. CRITICISM OF CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS

Celebrity endorsement is not all rosy. Several risks are associated with this brand communications strategy; therefore luxury brands should meticulously evaluate all the inter-connecting elements related to this choice. The following list covers some of the potential hazards involved in celebrity endorsement.

- Celebrities can get into debates that can harm the brands they endorse.
- The image of celebrities can be damaged as a result of professional or personal circumstances, involuntarily transferring this to the brands they currently represent.
- Celebrities can become overexposed and lose their star appeal as a result of endorsing multiple brands.

- Celebrities, who choose to alter their image, might sometimes be a contradictory to the image of brands that they presently support.
- Celebrities may make a choice to calculatedly scratch the brand that they feel didn't meet their extraneous demands or did not give them the star treatment they desired.

Finally, celebrities are getting wise to their star strengths and appeal power and are also becoming more willing to use this in branching out their careers. They now understand the importance and influence of personal branding and are exploiting it and also extending it to commercial branding. As a result, several celebrities have ventured into the fashion and accessories businesses and more are on the way. Jennifer Lopez, Sean Combs, and Jessica Simpson all have clothing lines; Victoria Beckham designs jeans; Elizabeth Hurley has launched a swimwear brand while Kylie Minogue already has a flourishing lingerie brand, called Love Kylie. In addition, the list of celebrities that have launched perfumes named after them is steadily increasing: Jennifer Lopez, Britney Spears, Paris Hilton, Celine Dion, Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen, Elizabeth Taylor, Naomi Campbell, Michael Jordan, Jessica Simpson, Antonio Banderas, Donald Trump, Cindy Crawford, etc.

The element of credibility has two important dimensions—expertise and trustworthiness. (Kirmani and Wright, 2005)ThumsUp (soft drink) commercials have used Salman Khan and Akshay Kumar as spokespersons and taken advantage of their image of being rugged and tough because of their action roles in movies. (Mahajan et al, 2007)

Millward Brown has recognised the role that ambassadors can play in growing brand awareness and boosting financial results. The research agency has developed a Cebra (celebrity + brand) study that reflects what consumers think about celebrities. It hopes the study tool will make the process of choosing ambassadors less painful and reflective of what consumers really think about celebrities. The pilot results of Cebra, which is based on a panel of 2,000 UK consumers, suggest which brands and celebrities would have a positive effect if they were paired up. It also suggests celebrities that complement each other and celebrities that have opposite traits - ideal for brands wanting to use a group of celebrities in a campaign, (see safety in numbers, page 19). The panel was also asked to rate whether they thought somebody was a positive or negative role model. "Brands are investing a lot of money and trust in these affiliations. You are judged by the friends you keep - that concept is at the heart of associative marketing," says Husak. "It is about leveraging the interests of what people are passionate about, whether it's a sports personality, comedian or musician. You're trusting that you are going to get the right 'rub off'."

Choosing a celebrity depends on what message a brand is looking to communicate, or on what kind of audience it wants to reach.

		Product
Celebrity		

- One star too many brands:** Amitabh Bachchan ‘the lord of endorsements’, used to feature in advertisements of BPL, Pepsi, ICICI, Parker, Cadbury, Nerolac, Dabur Hajmola, Dabur Chawanprash, Rin, Himani Fast Relief, Navratna, Emami Boroplus, Binani Cement, and Eveready. Sharukh Khan for Pepsi, Airtel, Pepsodent, Navratan Talc, Sona-Chandi Chawanprash, Tag Huer, Hyundai, Mayur Suitings Shirtings, Videocon, Sun Feast, Dish TV, Fair & Handsome.
- One product too many stars:** Coca-Cola had a range of celebrity endorsements from Amitabh Bachchan, Aamir Khan, Aishwarya Rai, Kareena Kapoor (Limca), Akshay Kumar (Thums up). Pepsi which had Rahul Dravid, Kareena. **Olay** had Madhuri Dixit, Sushmita Sen, Kajol and now Karishma.
- Long association of a brand with a star:** Aishwarya Rai had been consistently maintained with Lux, Loreal, Kareena Kapoor with Vivel Di Wills, Sony Vaio, Priyanka Chopra with Garnier.

But the question lurch minds of many advertisers are that does it ultimately influence buying decision?

Customer-Centric Approach in Advertising

When it is propagated that Kareena Kapoor uses Vivel; Aishwarya Rai uses Lux, Loreal; Shipla Shetty and now Shamita Shetty endorsing Pantene: the message conveyed is that if we do so should the viewers. The idea is to woo the buyers and influence their purchasing behavior. Delving deep, if the endorser is the consumer, the huge costs due to brand image of celebs get reduced and association with the ultimate buyer strengthens. The multi-national brands have for long drifted away from the celebrity endorsements. The products which are destined for the people at large have now the exposure to technology and the conviction that they are powerful enough to make an impact on the potential users. Brands that have done away with celebs are: Maggi, Dove, Clinic-Plus, Hero-Honda, Fair& Lovely, Amul, Horlicks, Vodafone, Tata DoCoMo, Taaza Tea, to name a few. The use of cartoons/animations entertains younger audience and an elderly in Maggi, Domino’s seems to cover this segment that criticizes fast-food.

IV. CONCLUSION

Celebrities, talented or not, are a quick way into the minds and wallets of consumers. There is always the risk that a celebrity will fall from his pedestal. But with the raft of talent and reality television shows, new celebrities are born and die every week. Recognizing which dominate the mind and heart of consumers is difficult. With customers from all parts of the globe will feature the company website as ‘united in diversified’ format.

All publicity is good publicity, so the adage goes. Customer Endorsement, is thus in vogue and sure to stay.

REFERENCES

- [1] "Celebrities: I'm a Celebrity sign me up." *Management Today* 1 May 2010: 38. *InfoTrac Management Collection*. Web.
- [2] Costa, MaryLou. "Celebrity Ambassadors: Finding the perfect match." *Marketing Week* 1 Apr. 2010: 18. *InfoTrac Management Collection*. Web.
- [3] Okonkwo Uche, ‘Luxury Brands & Celebrities: An Enduring Branding Romance’ accessed on: http://www.brandchannel.com/papers_review.asp?sp_id=1234
- [4] Dr. Venkateswaran Vikram, (March 19, 2012), ‘Celebrity Endorsements: Do they Work?’ accessed on: <http://trak.in/tags/business/2012/03/19/celebrity-endorsements-work/>