

Celebrity endorsement narrative



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SYNOPSIS It is a known fact that the best endorsements achieve an eclectic balance between the product (brand) and the celebrity.

Giving a brand a 'face' is more than just a marketing strategy to increase sales or gain market share, it is a decision that can change the future of the brand forever. Choice of the celebrity, hence, is of utmost importance and is usually done based on many different parameters – appeal, looks, popularity or even just a fantasy figure to endorse a brand. In today's highly competitive markets, big brands are at logger-heads when it comes to products, each having a similar product to that of a rival. Where does one brand gain that quintessential advantage – advertising, service, promise of trust, or even the all important price factors? Advertising seems to be the best platform where brands prefer to compete on – right from hiring the best advertising agencies to getting the biggest celebrities.

What would be the formula to success then? Well, a good creative agency, a large enough promotional budget and a huge star to endorse your brand would definitely ensure in the minds of a brand management team a feeling of security, success and a triumph over the competitors brand. The general belief among advertisers is that brand communication messages delivered by celebrities and famous personalities generate a higher appeal, attention and recall than those executed by non-celebrities. The quick message-reach and impact are all too essential in today's highly competitive environment. The different models applied by brands to achieve the full potential of such endorsements, highlight the need for a convergence between the theoretical and pragmatic approaches of brand building and effective advertising. The importance of a celebrity-brand match and the various roles played by them

as brand-associates show the momentum this strategy has gained in the last decade or so.

We put forward certain ideas like ‘ positioning by association’, ‘ diminishing celebrity utility’ and the Multiplier Effect which show the triangular relationship between the brand, the consumer and the celebrity. India is a country where people are star-struck by film stars, cricketers, politicians, and even criminals. Why? Populations of 1 billion and ticking, everyday people need something or someone to look up to. A sense of security, admiration, comfort, familiarity, and above all, someone they aspire to be at some hidden level in their lives. And clever marketers leverage this very celebrity appeal and are successfully carrying out their jobs by giving the bottom lines of all the brands what they want – profit, market share and even recall.

But how much star power is too much? “ Does Amitabh really use Tide,” asked a 6 year old to her mother. Her mother laughs and says, “ No way, just a gimmick. ” What does that do to the brand? Now, despite the potential benefits derived from celebrity endorsements, they increase a marketer’s risk manifolds and should be treated with full attention and aptitude. A brand should be cautious when employing celebrities to ensure promise believability and delivery of the intended effect. The growing importance of mythical characters as celebrities and their sway over the target segments are ample proof of public demand for icons to look up to. As the celebrities traverse from a mere commercial presence to public welfare message endorsements, a whole new dimension is added to this process and helps us in achieving a holistic view of the impact which celebrities generate in every sphere and segment through their well-versed endorsements.

At the end of the day, do any stakeholders in a company (employees, contractors, customers, shareholders, communities the company supports with jobs) benefit from a celebrity endorsement? Does anyone buy a product because a Bollywood or TV actor/actress stands up and reads a script in somewhat convincing manner? Are their distinctions in how consumers perceive these types of endorsements and respond to them? What happens when a celebrity endorser gets involved in a public scandal, or worse, dies? Will the product lose consumer support or perish? The most important thing to remember is that putting a celebrity in an ad is not an idea in itself. Unfortunately, this is how most celebrities are being used in Indian advertising, where they just become a prop. Ideally, there should be an idea that makes the celebrity relevant to the product and the consumer. A celebrity's presence in the ad should be contextual. Celebrity endorsement cannot guarantee fool-proof success.

The celebrity endorsement strategy must be integrated with target market characteristics, and the other elements of the marketing mix such as product design, branding, packaging, and pricing. The message execution that will be mouthed by the celebrity must likewise be made clear and single-minded. You can do this cleverly by aligning the spirit of the brand to the product, or by using a celebrity because it ensures that people will notice you, and hopefully remember what the brand is saying. Smart associations are ones where the former happens.

Before we go into analyzing success and failure stories of brands, we examine the title once again and try looking at it extremely minutely THE IMPACT As defined earlier, impact would be both short term and long term, <https://assignbuster.com/celebrity-endorsement-narrative/>

but here the focus would be more on the long term implications of the brand. Measurement of this would be challenging and data would be difficult to obtain. The parameters on which impact could be measured would be on a comparative basis of the brand before and after the celebrity began endorsing the brand. Sales / revenue, market share, brand recall, level of repurchase, brand loyalty, trust, image and perception of the brand per say. In this trend of creative advertising, we see usage of celebrities of all walks in life – particularly actors, film stars, models, sports persons, and the whole gamut.

But the usage can always backfire if the choice of the star is completely contradictory in nature to the brand. Believability and association of brand to celebrity is important. Selection of celebrities can be done while they are at their peak or when they are destined for greatness in the near future. Again a risk that may go either way.

What is important at some level is the value that a celebrity adds to a particular brand. The advertiser tries his best to make the celebrity and brand as analogous as possible. The celebrity endorser is seen to score quite well on dimensions such as trustworthiness, believability, persuasiveness, and likeability when tested for reaction from people. This is important to a marketer as if he can get a celebrity to make the masses follow, believe or listen to him, he has been successful.

Article Jane Taylor could not have given a better cue with her immortal nursery rhyme* in the early nineteenth century, as the advertisers today discover – Consumers like gazing at stars. Michael Jordan appears on the

telly and eyes are fixated, Shahrukh's voice booms over the radio and ears perk up, Britney sashays across and heads turn. This is the power of celebrity advertising and it is what corporations across the globe pray to transform into ringing cash registers. The advertisers believe that brand images built through celebrities achieve a higher degree of attention and recall for consumers, eventually leading to higher sales. Undoubtedly, the potential benefits of using celebrity advertising to promote brand images and products are significant, but so are the costs and associated risks.

Nevertheless, companies are willing to play the game. Love them or loathe them, celebrities have emerged as frontline warriors in the war of brands and competitive advertising. A central goal of advertising is the persuasion of customers, i. e. , the active attempt to change or modify consumer's attitude towards brands.

In this respect, the credibility of an advertisement plays an important role in convincing the target audience of the attractiveness of the company's brand. Pursuing a celebrity endorsement strategy enables advertisers to project a credible image in terms of expertise, persuasiveness, trustworthiness, and objectiveness. Marketers have been leveraging celebrity appeal for a long time. Across categories, whether in products or services, more and more brands are banking on the mass appeal of celebrities. As soon as a new face ascends the popularity charts, advertisers queue up to have it splashed all over. The success of such celebrity endorsements even encouraged political parties to 'hire' celebs for rallies for gathering crowds in the last general elections.

Star endorsement deals are big in every way. They are big on expenses and can have huge implications on the brand's fortunes. Celebrities have an enormous potential to shape the destinies of the brands they endorse, albeit sometimes negatively. Therefore, marketers who use celebrities must do so prudently, thinking through the concept of such endorsements carefully before adapting it into the message strategy. The celebrity-factor phenomenon seems so simple and yet it is intricate enough to send millions of money washed down without as much as a blink.

There is no doubt whatsoever after decades of strong evidence, that celebrities indeed deliver a premium in terms of impact and memorability, not only to the promotion's direct audience but also to their related sets like friends and family. The use of celebrities is a testimony to their ability to cut through the clutter and reach the brand's target audience immediately and effectively. But then, if this were the sole case, names like Michael Jackson or Md. Azharuddin would not cause many furrows. Hence, it becomes clear that any celebrity endorsement is a two-way funnel between the personality and the product wherein both take upon each other's image and responsibility. This brings us to a delicate ground wherein we need to carefully assess the impact of celebrity cajoling on consumer perception and purchase behavior.

The immediate question which comes to the mind is " Why celebrities", when the same money can be used to promote the same brand in myriad ways through non-celebrity figures. Celebrities are people who enjoy public recognition of a large group of people. Celebrities may convey a broad range of meanings, involving demographic categories (e. g. , age, gender and status), personality and lifestyle types.

For instance, people adore Sachin Tendulkar because he represents a middle-class Maharashtrian boy who made it big with sheer hard work. Likewise, Amitabh Bachchan for most is an icon of style, trust and dependability. It would do us well to realize that in this era of slick competition, speed is the key. Celebrities reflect the modern society, transfer their associated qualities to the brand and project a living, breathing image to the product as opposed to a faceless entity. This triggers a chain of social influence which allows the consumers to be in accord instantly with the communicated attitude. As discussed by Kelman (1961), the basis for the effectiveness of celebrity-endorsed advertising can be linked to this process of identification and internalization of the desired behavior.

Price of fame may be high for the celebrity endorsed brands but they have both what the markets and the everyday common man want – attention, power and star sizzle. In the same breath, the theoretical model ‘hierarchy-of-effects’ suggests that for a purchase to take place, the consumer must be first aware of the product, then inculcate a liking towards it, and finally develop an intention to acquire it. This ascension is catalyzed by celebrity presence during brand promotion. Be it Rajnikant making a demographic connection or the new avatar of Amitabh Bachchan forging a psychological attachment, they carry a mass appeal and establish instant brand credibility while adopting a subtle persuasive approach.

It is presumed that a personality’s dynamic qualities of attractiveness, likeability and appeal are superimposed on the brand image and lead it to acceptance by their fans and the general mass. We can now safely look at the various roles played by the celebrities in this vigorous exercise of name

and fame sharing. Usually, the foremost character is that of an Endorser, accepting the product claims and signaling personal preference for the brand – something like Beyonce and Beckham for Pepsi. The mantle of Spokesperson comes next as the celebrity speaks of company vision and brand values. Who can forget Amitabh's open ranting about ICICI Bank? The spokesperson takes somewhat of a personal responsibility for the brand promises. And then, there is a coup.

We talked all the while about celebrities helping the brand grow and reach new heights, but they have also proven their ability to pull the brands from dire straits and help them bounce back. The Cola companies and the chocolate major Cadbury's successfully used their Trouble-shooter guardians to overcome product controversies in India. The final vista sees the celebrities personally get into the act themselves and go for Personality Branding. This strategic climb is still in its nascent stages in the Indian scenario but a rabid act abroad. Latino singer Jennifer Lopez, who released her first perfume " Glow by J.

Lo" in 2002, is estimated to have grossed over \$45 million in sales of this perfume, within four months of its launch! The stars really shine; on themselves. So is the celebrity endorsement strategy impeccable? Apparently not. Like any other strategic move in the warfield, it too suffers from its own flaws – overexposure, cluttering, confusion and scepticism – an all too familiar scenario. Only the brand managers are smart enough to keep changing their pawns timely. Brands employ a smart technique which can well be called ' positioning by association'. The qualities attributed to the

personality, rub-off on the brand image and become associated with it in the consumers' minds.

But the moment there is a breakdown, this position backfires in the first instant. Whenever the celebrity is out of line in his personal or social behaviour, he becomes liability as an advertisement device. We are all well aware of the George Michael fiasco or the O. J.

Simpson cases where the brands instantly shunned them due to fear of negative publicity. It is pertinent for the brands to realize that two things should not happen at any point of their communication, if they are to sustain the streak of popular celebrity endorsements. First, while the brand should enjoy the positive vibes of the celebrity, it should be flexible enough to wriggle out of any undesirable situation that the endorser might present. Get a celebrity, create a hype and brand buzz, and fleece the surge and move on to the next.

Second, under no circumstances should the celebrity be allowed to overshadow the brand – never let him/her become your brand. Shahrukh 'Mayur' Khan, Madhuri Dixit for Emami and Sunil Gavaskar for Dinesh Suitings are classic examples in this case. The moment you cease brand relationship with these over-portrayed endorsers, the euphoria is beaten and confusion reigns in the customer's mind. Smart brands follow a strategy similar to the ocean-wave phenomenon – Roll a big wave, generate customer delight, submerge his loyalty towards competition, and then, bring another huge one.

Celebrity Endorsements Advertising experts concur that you must consider a celebrity endorsement if, and only if, the message strategy warrants it, not

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as a cover for a poor idea or bad product quality. And last but not the least, one should seriously consider the risks of associating with a well-known personality, and hedge against a future scandal by not relying on just one celebrity and instead linking the brand's association with a broad theme represented by several celebrities. And if you can't afford many celebrities, then get your thinking caps on, and come up with a better, safer idea. That will ensure that you're in control of the brand's destiny – not the stars!

Inertia is a potent force and consumers have that in plenty.

Brand managers employ celebrities in the age-old AIDA model to counter that. The Celebrities draw Attention, generate Interest, evoke Desire and induce Action from the audience. Our safe assumption till now has been that there is perfect congruency between the brand, the celebrity and the target segment. Let's drop this for a while, to land on the practical ground and look into real-time decisions. An old Japanese proverb goes that “ Vision without action is a daydream but action without vision is a nightmare.

” Managements across the world need to realize that no matter how great the ad-spend and famous the celebrity, they cannot succeed if the core product offering fails to meet the consumer expectations. Every endorsed brand may garner some start-up euphoria and blind-spot sales, but to sustain its meteoric rise, it cannot afford product dissatisfaction. In such cases, the celebrities are also quick to dissociate themselves from the brand, as it hampers their carefully cultivated image of an infallible character. Again, not every celebrity works for every product.

Each personality carries a set of perceptions attached to it and these have to be in sync with the perception the brand has or wishes to generate.

Mercedes Benz would never hire a Govinda in India or Michael Jordan elsewhere, but these same men have simply worked wonders for respective brands like Navratan Oil and Nike. A clean, natural fit between the celebrities and the brand image enhances the latter's value. Lux is a glowing example of being the ' beauty soap of film stars' since the last fifty years! A well-managed celebrity endorsement has the ability to convey to the customers that the celebrity is benefiting from the brand, and they will too. Many endorsements fail because they use the celebrities like a prop in the advertisement copy.

There should be an idea which makes the celebrity relevant, firstly to the product and finally to the consumer. The bottom line is that the celebrity endorsements work truly only when the commercial is provoking and original. Aamir Khan's successful incarnations in the ' Thanda Matlab' copies for Coca-Cola have added a new dimension to this assertion. It projected the brand as the star, being cherished by the celebrity and not the other way round. In addition, an effective endorser should not associate with many different products and fall in the trap of overexposure. Keep the consumer's mind clear from confusion and do not let him feel that you are in it for the money rather than truly believing in the brand.

The celebrity-brand saliency takes a beating if he is rummaging with several brands and distorts the brand image. The Law of Diminishing Marginal Celebrity Utility would further ensure that the return on such investment would be nothing short of negative. The ad-recall and celebrity association

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depletes rapidly in such clutter-cases and, hence, the utility obtained by the brand takes a pitfall. An increasingly popular strategy is the employment of the product placement tactic in the movies or television shows featuring the sponsored celebrities.

Remember when James Bond traded in his Ashton Martin for a BMW Z3 in the “ Golden Eye” or the looming presence of FedEx in the Tom Hanks super-hit “ Castaway”. The brand believes that with such peripheral routes of communication, it will be able to initiate an alternative channel in the identification process with the consumer. Coca-cola presented this strategy on the Indian scene with its multi-million product placement deal in the movie “ Taal”. It is so much like ‘ not in your face, and yet there’, urging you passively. Research has again shown that the subliminal effects of such brand imagery tend to linger in the consumer memory for a longer time-period than the direct commercials. Brand, Celebrities & Consumers Figure 1: Factors Impacting a Brand while being viewed by a Consumer in MediaThe model above shows the various factors that affect a celebrity endorsed brand while viewed by a consumer in the media (both TV and print).

The central idea being the impact on brand. The three major parts to a brand being shown are: – • The Product • Advertisement • The celebrity endorsing it It is important is to study the relationship between these factors and how they together act for or against the brand. The product is important, of course, it may fulfill a need, want or a desire. Quality is quintessential and, hence, nowadays it is understood the product is of highest quality.

So what next? The advertisement is important as a good product could see an early exit if the advertisement is handled badly, and otherwise, a mediocre product which is tastefully handled goes a long way. Lastly, the celebrity in the advertisement, recall, trust, familiarity are some of the reasons that they are used. Now consider the interactions of these individual factors. The best of superstars can be doing the advertisement but if the product is far from the image the star has, the whole advertisement is a waste. Imagine an Amitabh doing an advertisement for ad for youth apparel.

Well, exceptions can be there but then again it depends on the way it is done. Believability is of vital importance, the TVS Victor advertisement shows us the bike being compared to the bat of Sachin and the strokes he plays. Classically executed advertisement with the bike and Sachin coming out as winners. The relationship between a product and its advertisement again can be either dependant or none. In that case, a shock value makes people remember the brand better and, hence, a possible long term loyalty.

Selection of Celebrity Celebrity endorsements are not new. One of the earliest examples is Coca Cola who used Lillian Nordica, a Metropolitan Opera Star as their first model or endorser. She became a household name all across USA known as the Coca Cola Girl. Soon people forgot her as an actress but remembered her as the Coca Cola girl.

She did wonders for the brand and this led the company to release a series of these advertisements for over 30 years. Relationship between a Celebrity & a Brand To understand how consumers associate celebrities to brands is well documented by a research study by Anderson (1976); Collins & Loftus

(1975); Rumelhart, Hinton & McClelland (1986). In their study, associative learning principles were based on a conception of memory as a network consisting of various nodes connected by associative links. In the research context, celebrities and brands both represent nodes, which initially are unconnected but become linked over time through the endorsement process. When a consumer thinks about a brand, the link with the celebrity node is activated to a certain level through spreading activation (Anderson 1983a).

The joint activation of brand and celebrity provides a path over which one's evaluation of the celebrity has an opportunity to transfer to the brand. The key to the process is the simultaneous activation of the brand and celebrity nodes. Negative information about the celebrity activates the celebrity node, which then activates the brand node to some degree and allows reduced evaluation of the celebrity to transfer to the brand. Studies by Noffsinger et al.

(1983) and Judd et al. (1991) provide empirical evidence demonstrating that attitudes can be affected in such a way. It is also important to view the consumer in their social and cultural setting to further see how celebrity endorsements increase sales and impact brands over time. Celebrities usually form a very good example of a reference group appeal. This is particularly beneficial to a marketer and a brand who can cash in on the success of the star and, hence, push his brand.

People who idolize their celebrities, hence, have a biased affinity to the brand their favorites endorse. As time passes on, they believe that they by adopting the brand that their celebrity endorses are becoming more like

them. Celebrities can be used in four ways namely: testimonial, endorsement, actor and spokesperson. Right now the current hot favorite in India is roping in celebrities for social causes like pulse polio, etc. This has shown to be having a positive effect on the people.

In India, Bollywood and sport personalities rule the mind-space and airwaves. A recent study by FCB-ULKA was done on celebrity endorsements in India. Here, they discussed two parameters: Compatibility Index and Trait Index when it came to finding the relationship between a celebrity and a brand. Compatibility Index meant that the consumers saw a suitable match between the brand and the celebrity. Trait Index was based on the match between brand and celebrity personality traits.

The numbers showed that Compatibility Index was more favorable than Trait Index. E. g. , Hrithik Roshan scored high on his Compatibility Index (100) as compared to his Trait Index with Coca Cola. But the end user being the consumer preferred him. The other startling fact was the high points 93 and 100 by Salman Khan.

But Thums-Up had to drop him after Salman's accident. But people still associate Thums-Up with the Khan. The other important factor is unaided association and Salman scored higher than other competition. But in the long run, to protect the brand image, Salman was dropped.

So what is important is the way the customer perceives a brand and the celebrity, so if the celebrity is favored, it does have a positive influence over the brand. The other factor is the sheer image or popularity of the star, if the star's image is larger than life, for example, for Amitabh Bachhan or Sachin

Tendulkar, the Compatibility Index seems to be a natural corollary. Taking the millennium superstar Amitabh Bachan, as an endorser, he fulfills all the FRED objectives, namely, Familiarity (target market is aware of him, finds him friendly, likeable, dependable and trustworthy); Relevance (which says that there should be a link between the endorser and the product as well as between the endorser and the audience); Esteem (the polio endorsement, for example, is successful as the masses see him as a credible name-face-voice); Differentiation (in all his projections, he is seen to be one among the masses, and yet he towers above them. He is different).

His appeal is universal; lesser mortals merely cater to specific niches. While there may be different reasons, depending on the category, the lifecycle stage in which the brand is, and the particular marketing mantra being the flavor of the moment, the main reason is to make the brand stand out and to facilitate instant awareness. For example, in the much talked about Shah Rukh – Santro campaign, the organization wanted to overcome the shortcoming of an unknown brand, Korean at that. The objective of the company was to garner faster brand recognition, association and emotional unity with the target group. The Santro ad showed the highest recall amongst auto ads, despite average media spends for the category.

Reason being simple – star power paid off. Another example was the launch of Tamarind by S. Kumar, they reckoned they spent 40-50 per cent less on media due to the sheer impact of using Hrithik Roshan who was riding on the ‘Kaho Na Pyar Hai’ wave of Success. Ad recall was as high as 70 per cent, and even the normally conservative trade got interested (so while a new brand would normally take 8-10 months for entry into a Shopper’s Stop,

Tamarind was prominently displayed within 20 days of launch). But now looking at the long term effects of Hrithik, his movies began to flop and it may seem a sheer co-incidence that the Tamarind brand died out as well.

Looking on the flip side, the biggest concerns from the advertiser's point of view is that of 'vampirism' – the celebrity being bigger than the brand.

Consider the 1980s when Dinesh Suitsings chose Sunil Gavaskar as their brand endorser. Soon it was seen that Gavaskar completely overshadowed the brand. A similar case was that of Shah Rukh and Mayur Suitsings, where post termination of the contract, the corporate had to invest crucial monies in a campaign where the sole objective was to wean the brand identity off Shah Rukh Khan.

So having a celebrity who may outshine your product is not such a viable idea is the common consensus. The other problem is that of duration of endorsement, and a possible mismatch between the celebrity's life cycle and that of the brand. Owing to unavailability of dates, sometimes long-term contracts are signed, but the celebrity's life might be over soon. Multiple endorsements are the other problem.

There is unfortunately a limited pool of celebrities who can resonate with consumers. So you have the same celebrity endorsing several categories, as in case of Shah Rukh and Sachin, who are completely over-exposed – one would assume a fair degree of confusion and little room for credibility, and hence, a possible devaluing amongst customers. Studying TV and print advertisements, one will realize that either some celebrities are endorsing several brands or a specific brand is endorsed by different spokespersons.

These concepts are called multiple brand endorsement and multiple celebrity endorsement respectively. The question is, does this special form of celebrity endorsement affects consumers' brand attitudes? Following Tripp et al.

(1994), the endorsement of as many as four products negatively influences the celebrity spokesperson's credibility (i.

e. , expertise and trustworthiness) and likeability. They further add that these effects are independent of the celebrity, i. e.

, the perceptions of even well-liked stars can be influenced. Reasons may be found in the lack of distinctiveness, with one famous person endorsing several products instead of concentrating on and representing one specific brand. Though these findings may be valid, it does not automatically mean that the concept of multiple product endorsement is useless. Further, research is suggested on potential positive effects, like transfer of positive brand images, and on the shape of consumers' response when more than four products are endorsed. Facts over the Years • Approximately 60-70% of all television commercials feature famous people. • Aishwarya Rai had once endorsed 'Fuji-Film' camera rolls.

The company made an agreement with her to endorse their camera rolls.

But, Aishwarya's magic did not work there and they had to terminate the contract. Amitabh Bachchan (AB) was seen endorsing Maruti's Versa Car.

The AB factor worked wonders as far as generating curiosity was concerned but the actual product couldn't meet the expectations of people, and hence, the endorsement strategy didn't work. He has been used very effectively by

Parker Pens, ICICI Bank and Cadbury's to name a few. • Bata's sales doubled soon after they adopted Rani Mukherjee as their brand ambassador.

- Magic Johnson lost his endorsement deals when he announced in 1991 that he's HIV-positive. It wasn't until July 2003 that he landed his first endorsement deal since the announcement. Ticket sales at Wimbledon are known to have shot up significantly for all matches featuring the latest 'sex-symbol' on the circuit – Anna Kournikova. An average player who is yet to win even a single tennis tournament, Anna is known to have earned far more from endorsements than her tennis career could ever have given her.

The Argument for Celebrity Endorsements The need for brands to use luminaries in advertising is most felt when the concerned brand has very close substitutes available; when there is a need to create a unique and clear differentiation for the brand, and when the brand has to make an impact at its introductory stage. Marketing people use celebrity endorsements for very good reasons.

Research has indicated that target prospects are more likely to choose goods and services endorsed by celebrities than those without such endorsements. Celebrities facilitate instant awareness and immediate attention. In this era of sound bites, channel surfing, visual orientation and quick newspaper scanning, there is great demand for people's time and focus. Studies have shown that some of the attributes associated with the celebrity are passed on to the brand. For instance, if a motorbike is associated with a celebrity who connotes performance then one need not hunt for the reassurance required to make the down payment. The idea, thus, is to convince people of the utility lying in your brand.

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For instance, if I want to say Victor motorcycle has high performance and it is hard to convince a priori, then it's easier to say: ' Sachin says Victor is great and Sachin is a high performer; therefore Victor is a high performer too'. The brand, therefore is riding piggyback on the celebrity. At a rational level, everyone knows it is a paid endorsement, and there is no immediate, conscious association. But at a subliminal level an association occurs – the attributes of one rubs off onto the other. That's why you wouldn't use a Prem Chopra to promote ICICI Bank. The resounding success of Aamir Khan's antics in Coca Cola ads can be seen in the catchy phrases that have become a part of everyday life because the communication entertained consumers.

It is not hard to figure out that Coke has chosen to associate itself with Aamir Khan, the trendy face of India, which is Coke's professed personality.

Likewise, Santro is using Shahrukh's personality, not his functionality to make their uncool-looking car look cool. Celebrities can provide testimony for a product or service – particularly when the product has contributed to their status. Consumers will more likely try Cadbury's chocolate endorsed by Amitabh Bachchan since he has openly stated that he regularly eats it. This kind of relationship can increase a consumer's belief and trust in the product and its benefits. Charismatic celebrities can also define, refresh, and add dimension to the brand image.

Kaun Banega Crorepati (KBC) and Amitabh Bachchan (AB) worked because of the fit factor; KBC's implied proposition was ' this is a show that an average person can come on and win'. Viewers watched people like themselves talking to AB, being hugged by him and so on. Those who have been on the show said they felt like crorepatis even if they didn't win! But the biggest

outcome of KBC was that people felt endeared to AB again. Brand Image & Celebrity Research has shown that there are three aspects that influence a customer's attitude and, hence, the long term impact on the brand – Attractiveness, Trustworthiness and Expertise.

The matrix below shows us the images and the celebrities: – Aspect of BrandImageCelebrityProduct Attractiveness Elegance Renuka Shahane Whisper Beauty Madhuri Dixit Emami Classy Saif & Tiger Pataudi Asian Paints-Royale Stylish Fardeen Khan Provogue Amitabh Bachhan Reid & Taylor Trustworthiness Honest Tarun Tejpal Tehelka Reliable Sachin Tendulkar TVS Victor Expertise Knowledge Sachin & Sehwaq Reebok Qualified Naina Balsavar Shampoo Hence, we see depending on the product and aspect of brand, the choice of the celebrity is important so that the celebrity can reflect that and not go against the brand. Getting back to the basic of branding after such exhaustive examples can make us reflect on our choices of celebrity and the impact on the brand. We talk about Brand Equity, Brand Identity and Position. It is worthwhile to see the effect of a celebrity on these critical elements. Brand equity essentially made up of loyalty, awareness, perceived quality, associations, and other proprietary brand assets.

The celebrity should be chosen in such a way as to reinforce and strengthen the brand in all these elements but the question is, can he? Take an example of another star Fardeen Khan, who endorses Provogue. Snazzy fashionable apparel from an Indian manufacturer with the backing of a star son was a great idea for the brand image. It was able to attract new customers who were fashion conscious but unable to afford high price international brands.

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Awareness of the brand was phenomenal as fashion shows, print and media advertising was booming and Fardeen and Provgue had become a national phenomenon.

Quality was given utmost importance and, hence, from the manufacturer side, the commitment to the customer was complete. Competition was present but sales figures showed Provgue reaping handsomely. Then the image of the so-called Bad Boy Fardeen emerged with the drug and brawls in night clubs. This did lead to a certain discontent amongst fans of the star and the brand. But remarkably not much effect on sales.

It seemed that the consumers had forgotten Fardeen's issues and remained loyal to the brand. Today Fardeen is still the mainframe picture of every advertisement and the brand has not lost any of its shine. The Argument Against Celebrity Endorsements The argument against it uses two questions as its premise: – 1) Does it work?) Is it too expensive an idea given the returns it delivers? The marketing enquiry as a corollary to this then asks: – 1)How will it work for my brand? 2) What will that achieve for me in terms of market share? The ever-expanding universe of mega-brand hopefuls is running out of mega celebrities to brandish their products. How many brands does Amitabh Bachhan endorse? What about Tendulkar? The fact that a handful of celebrities are enrobed in labels is a symptom that the endorsement arena is too cluttered. Implicitly, hiring an overused celebrity will probably yield unsatisfactory results.

Make no mistake: the law of diminishing marginal celebrity utility is at play no matter how larger-than-life a celebrity may be. A study conducted by

Business World showed that over 80% of the people who remembered seeing Amitabh Bachhan in a paint ad thought it was for Asian Paints. For the uninitiated, it was Nerolac. Likewise, the Hutch ad featuring a dog and a little kid did a better job of brand building than Coke with Hrithik Roshan.

Of course, defining clearly what you hope the celebrity endorsement will achieve is the key to managing and assessing the return on investment. Is it merely brand awareness? Stronger recall leading to brand consideration? More credibility? Purchase preference? And can these media-made gods achieve these with one deft dialogue in a 30-second spot? Add to that the fact that celebrity advertising increases the marketer's financial risk. In a report released by the Cyber-Journal of Sport Marketing, it was revealed that Pepsi paid Shaquille O'Neal US \$25 million to endorse the popular soda brand. Tiger Woods received US \$40 million from Nike to support the company's youth marketing campaign. We wonder what the figure is for Michael Jordan.

However, the assumed acceptance of celebrity endorsement amongst an audience is a common advertiser fallacy, congruence of the celebrity's image with the category the celebrity is promoting is imperative. Nothing wrong in using celebrities, but they should add a finishing touch. Instead if the whole story is the celebrity and you are just looking at making noise than building your brand, then the brand slinks away into a quiet corner. For instance, Preity Zinta for Godrej refrigerators was a disaster. She just looked pretty but it was useless because she couldn't do anything for the brand! Whereas, the Whirlpool mum is clearly loveable and modern, and comes

across as a superwoman and does lend identical attributes to and about the brand. Celebrity endorsements have inherent flaws.

Excessive information has resulted in consumers knowing too much about celebrities. Consequently, any act deemed ‘ unethical’ in which a celeb is involved is likely to affect the perception of your brand. Consumers are likely to assume that it’s the red duty-free Ferrari, and not the economy TVS bike, that makes Sachin smile. Likewise, the sales of Thums Up were known to have been affected post Salman Khan’s indictment in the black-buck poaching case.

When a negative image of the celebrity is portrayed, a tainted picture is also painted for the company or brand, making it difficult to gain consumer trust to support the organization or buy the product. Although there is no way to guarantee that detrimental incidents like these won’t occur, some situations may be prevented by evaluating the proposed celebrity’s personal and professional behavior to determine if they may be vulnerable to negative situations. Measuring a Celebrity Endorsement It becomes very important to measure the effectiveness of a celebrity (or determine the worth of one). Few of the methods of measurement that are in practice are: – • The Q-SCORE Method • The FRED Principle The Q-SCORE Method There is a way to measure the credibility, believability, popularity, and like-ability of a celebrity. It’s called a Q-Score, and you can purchase the Q-Scores of the candidates you’re considering.

Consider both sides of the deal – for a client who wanted to use a celebrity endorser, and for a celebrity who was looking for an endorsement

opportunity. Once you've defined the kind of endorser you need (e. g. , athlete, actor, male/female, young/old, etc. , its well worth going through the Q-Score exercise. Evaluating the contribution of the endorser after you've already made the decision is not nearly as straightforward.

One time, many years ago, a company actually shot a commercial with a well-known (high Q-Score) endorser for national use, and it shot the same commercial with a good actor, not so well-known. The company ran a limited market test for 6 months with the unknown actor (cutting in the commercials locally, over national network schedule) so could quantify the sales impact of the celebrity. By the way, the celebrity was worth every penny of his outrageous fee. It ended up using him for years, and he helped the brand reach market leadership almost entirely on the strength of the commercials in which he appeared.

The FRED Principle This concept is seen as the foundation of a successful endorser selection. F is for Familiarity. The target market must be aware of the person, and perceive him or her as empathetic, credible, sincere and trustworthy. R is for Relevance.

There should be a meaningful link between the advertised brand and the celebrity endorser, and more important, between the celebrity endorser and the defined target market. The audience must be able to identify with the person. If consumers can immediately associate with an endorser, they will feel more predisposed to accepting, buying and preferring the brand to competition. E is for Esteem. Consumers must have the utmost respect and confidence for the celebrity. Amitabh Bachhan & Tendulkar have these.

So do Shahrukh Khan, Preity Zinta, Kapil Dev among others. The public respect them because of their distinguished careers and unassailable salesmanship. D is for Differentiation. The target consumers must see the endorser as a cut above the rest.

If there is no perceived disparity among celebrities, then the strategy will not work. Michael Jordan is an example of an international celebrity that rises above the clutter. This proves to be a huge contributory factor to his effectiveness as an endorser. The Fred concept is not a guarantee to success, but it can serve as a guideline when selecting a spokesperson.

Each organization and its objectives are different, and should be evaluated on an individual basis. Conclusion Celebrities have always been the easiest way for a new product launch (consumer goods) and will remain to do so in the near future on account of their mass appeal and a world full of star stuck loyal fans. But the impact on the brand is much greater than just an advertisement showing a celebrity. We have seen that the correct choice of a celebrity can surely increase sales but when it comes to long term loyalty and impact on the brand. The effect is yet somewhat debatable.

In the end, the product must deliver for the customer, no matter who endorses the product, if the customer does not see himself getting value from his purchase, he will not buy it. But yes, celebrities over time can influence the loyalty and make a person friendlier to a brand. Brand and celebrities are here to stay for a long time and in this age of slick advertising and mass media and unthinkable budgets, celebrities are having a field day charging huge amounts and making more money than their mainstream

professions. But then do they really care about the brand? Or is it just the money? But the bottom line, celebrity endorsements are here to stay.

Let us accept one thing – the world of advertising and brand building does not believe in the Laissez-Faire principle. Unless you reach out to the customer, make him think and nudge him that little bit, you will fall short of your targets and that is a cardinal sin, given the competition. The brand managers work on an extremely sleek, thought-controlling process which may be propounded as the Multiplier Effect. They are smart, pragmatic people and know very well that Mr. Singh, sitting in his cosy home in Delhi and watching his favourite action hero driving the brand new LX car model, would not walk up to the car showroom next day and book one for himself. They offer simple feelers like concept and lifestyle to him, which are inherent to the product advertisement, with or without the celebrity endorsement.

With the use of the celebrity, this effect is shrewdly magnified so as to allow the consumer to equate the personality and the brand together. Hence, whenever the consumer is watching the several images of her favourite actress alone, it conjures up multiple impressions of her sipping the XY brand of coffee, each time. The brand's ultimate goal is to be at the top of her choice bracket and it achieves this goal by being omnipresent in her memory through related celebrity imagery. Does it justify the obscene amounts of money paid to these celebrities? For firms with annual turnovers in excess of Rs.

1000 crores, an endorsement deal of Rs. 5-6 crores for such a response would indeed be a smart deal. In a Synovate/Blackstone Market Facts Survey

in India in late 2003, almost 47% respondents affirmed celebrity influence on their purchase behaviour. That's a lot of people influenced by celebrity endorsement! Talking about successful switchovers by celebrities among competitive brands, Aamir Khan had a 78% top brand recall with Coke. But such transitions are rare and involve a lot of hard work behind the scenes to dab any leftover effects of the celebrity's previous liaison with the competitor. While speaking of celebrities, we should be very clear as to who this term connotes to and the powers they carry.

Fido Dido for 7-UP, the Amul Girl or Tony the Tiger for Kellogg's Frosted Flakes are as much a celebrity as any breathing face. They reach their target consumer, they move the product, and they carry the brand. That's what counts. Of course, the gestation period is higher in the case of such creatives, but in the event of a hit, the comparative risks are minimized.

After all, they cannot get drunk, attract a controversy or commit a crime, as long as the management wants. In short, they are 'safe floaters' vis-a-vis their unpredictable human counterparts. Undoubtedly, there are many advocates for the clamp down upon the commercialisation of consumer emotions and money-making attitude of endorsers. But the celebrities have circumvented these allegations by appearing in non-commercial advertisements. When Aishwarya Rai appeals to the nation to donate their eyes while she personally pledges them, she strikes a chord with millions of viewers. Shabana Azmi inspires a sense of tremendous awe and respect while being shown as visiting HIV patients.

This reverence is what is later harnessed by the brands in the commercial angle. You grow in stature with the person. No matter how much we raise a hue and cry over one celebrity being all over the place and marketing just about everything, it still works for most of us. Indeed, the premise that celebrity advertising has the power to propel a brand and drive the sales can be argued.

The Pareto Principle is widely debated and the 80-20 rule does not have many takers in the advertising industry. That, “ 20% of advertising creates 80% of demand or sales”, may or may not be true. In either case it does not help. The word remains that for a scintillating endorsement, you need much more than a glowing face and aesthetic advertising.

You should back it up with your operational and communication skills. Using a celebrity in advertising is no panacea and the success of this process depends on several factors as discussed above. The careful selection of celebrity, matching the target segment and brand values, should be inherently stressed upon. The advertisers can use the Q Score, developed by a U. S. based marketing research agency, which considers two factors – awareness and likeability, while evaluating the celebrity.

Another important factor is the flexibility with which the companies can go in for hedging the risks associated in hiring a celebrity. They choose personalities from various fields or even appealing to various consumer perceptions, so that they can minimise the damage in cases of negative publicity due to any celebrity mistake. The cola brands spread their endorsements across a wide ‘ variety’ of celebrities such that even if one

falls, the others are still holding the fort. In terms of the future, celebrity endorsements are here to stay. Their ability to cut across the classes, caste barriers and apprehensions are simply too important to be sidelined.

They have been time-tested and delivered results repeatedly, given good hands. One could continue to wonder if these celebrity-hawkers are worth the money and the tantrums, but in a world of brand clutter and product muddle, celebrities seem to hit the nail on the head, more often than not. And to be honest, let's look around ourselves, why only Jane, aren't we all in a little appreciation of those stars gazing back at us! Appendix

BrandCelebrityUnaided AssociationCompatibility IndexTrait Fit Index Thumbs-up

Salman Khan93 93 100 Coke Hrithik Roshan83 100 50 Adidas Sachin73 85

25 Samsung Tabu54 68 25 Source: Cognito FCB ULKA 2002 Table 1:

Compatibility Index & Trait Fit Index of 4 Brands