

# Celebrity endorsement marketing campaigns assignment

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Celebrity endorsement is a billion dollar industries today (Kambitsis et al. , 2002) with companies signing deals with celebrities hoping that they can help them stand out from the clutter and give them a unique and relevant position in the mind of the consumer. According to Solomon (2002), the reasons for using celebrity endorsement involves its potential to create awareness, positive feelings towards their advertising and brand.

Research has shown that celebrity endorsement can have an impact on the consumer's attention, recall, evaluations and purchase intentions (Atkin and Block, 1993), Celebrity endorsement is a widely used tactic in marketing and much research as been done on the selection and effects of celebrity endorsement. Companies should use celebrities to endorse their products as a form of marketing to assist companies in advertising to consumers..

Celebrity endorsement is today more and more viewed as an integral part in an integrated marketing communication strategy.

Hamish Pringle (2004) argues that there are 3 macro factors in the market today that largely influence the reason why celebrity endorsement can be a valid strategy: (1) increasing opportunity for activity between brands and their customers; (2) era of consent referring to the situation we have today where the consumer has more control over the messages they receive (television, computers, web access); (3) increasing media and commercial clutter. Put these together and it makes it increasing difficult for brands to gain the consumers attention and interest.

Perhaps the most important decision to be made, besides choosing whether or not to use celebrity endorsers at all, is the choice of celebrity. Much research has been made in this area and several models have been made to explain and assist in the celebrity endorsement selection process (McGuire, 1985, McCracken 1989). An important prerequisite is the compatibility of the celebrity and the consumer's lifestyle. One model looked at the source credibility (Solomon, 1996). The basis is that the effectiveness of the message depends on the consumers perceived level of expertise and trustworthiness of the celebrity endorser.

The argument is that through internalization, the message from the celebrity endorser can influence opinions, beliefs, attitudes and behavior. Another model looked at source attractiveness (McGuire, 1985). This argues that consumers generally have a more positive attitude towards attractive people. Use of models and attractive people is a fairly common phenomenon in the world of celebrity endorsement. One model that is considered to take it a step further is the Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken, 1989).

It demonstrates that celebrity endorsers bring their own symbolic meaning into the endorsement process. The strengths of this model are that it considers celebrity status, class, gender, age, lifestyle, and personality. Many people see themselves as they imagine others see them. This type of theory is relevant to the Reebok campaign that works on self image and allowing people to be who they are (I am what I am). Solomon (2002) speaks about celebrities being most effective in situations involving high social risk, where the buyer is aware of the impression peers will have of him or her.

A celebrity endorser is relatively more effective for products high in psychological or social risk, involving elements as good taste, self-image, and opinion of others compared to a “ normal” spokesperson. Politicians and pundits routinely claim that celebrity endorsement have little sway on voters(USA Today). However, at least one celebrity does hold influence in the voting booth. Oprah Winfrey’s endorsement of Barack Obama has been said to have boosted him by one million votes in the primaries and caucuses.

People take political information from all sorts of sources in their daily life, and for some people Oprah is clearly one of them. Some research shows that consumers have a more positive view of celebrity endorsement in the cases where it is used for public information, or to get a message out for a product, or in this case a politician. Self image has been research in the context of celebrity endorsement, and established that it is an important factor in marketing (Fortini-Cambell, 1992). Some of the respondents told stories of how they were influenced by elebrity endorsement when they were younger. One person referenced Michael Jordan and his endorsement of the Nike shoes. This reflects self image when considering what to buy and what influenced them. It also reflects a need to be different as well as the same time identify with a group of people. Apparently this can go both ways. If one product gets too popular among a certain group it can actually make others choose another product even though they like it. Companies may also use celebrities to try to control or manipulate the consumer into buying the endorsed product.

This may have a negative impact, as consumers may view the celebrities as being puppets for the company. Companies are using celebrities to influence the consumers' behavior in a certain direction, at the same time the consumer often may perceive the celebrity to be lying when endorsing certain products. For example, many a celebrity has been photographed while enjoying a cold Pepsi much to the dismay of the marketing department for Coke that they are promoting. The celebrity is no longer perceived as genuine and may lose credibility.

The perception that most celebrity endorsement is about the celebrity using his/her image to make some extra money is fairly common, reflecting a perception that the celebrity is more into making money than actually believing in the product being endorsed. This is very negative for the perceived credibility of celebrities, and thereby hurts the effect celebrity endorsement has for the product being endorsed. It is fairly common among sports brands such as Reebok, Nike and Adidas to use an assortment of celebrities in their marketing.

This is largely undertaken to connect with the different and diverse target audiences of their products. One should be careful however in this strategy to take care of the core brand values, especially when using several different celebrities to endorse the core brand. Hsu and McDonald (2002) found that endorsing a product with multiple celebrities can be beneficial in attracting the different target audiences of the product for example the milk mustache campaign. There is not a lot of literature on the negative aspects of celebrity endorsement.

There are many things regarding celebrities that companies can not control, for example the celebrities' private life, their fame and the message that they may deliver to the consumers. Unsolicited highly public support from controversial celebrities also works in this manner. Although there may not be an official association, and people recognize that, but it certainly could have a very subliminal effect that could degrade the product. Britney Spears frequent unsolicited endorsement of Cheetos now has the company launching a massive multi-platform campaign to rebrand their mascot.

In conclusion, looking at the connection between a successful use of a celebrity endorsement one can see that there are several connections that are needed for the consumer to get a positive association and attitude towards a campaign. First of all the celebrity needs to be perceived as credible. To be perceived as credible one needs to be perceived as genuine, attractive, real, and it has to be connected to the consumer's self image or aspired self image. The second area that must be covered concerns the context or situation that the endorsement takes place in.

Celebrity endorsement works better when it is perceived as genuine, motivational and enlightening. In general there is a positive relationship with celebrities and products, especially if they are supporting charity or a public information campaign. However few slip ups are needed for the consumer to get a total different perception of the use of celebrity endorsement being fake and unsuccessful. Tracking the line from celebrity, misused or not behaving correctly will soon lead to a perception that is very negative both for the celebrity and the product endorsed.

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