RESEARCH PAPER
CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT : A MARKETING STRATEGY

By: Ms Radhika Madan
Lecturer - Marketing
IILM College, Gurgaon
98100-97566
0124-3354374

Abstract
The study explores the marketing strategy which is gaining importance in today's world. Celebrity Endorsements is one of the various advertising strategies that marketers are using to capture the attention of their target markets. As the modern marketing strategy of most business firms relies heavily on creative advertisements to promote their products to their customers. The main aim of an advertisement strategy is to persuade the highly educated, sophisticated and selective customer. Due to the increase in competition, companies cannot provide the customers with just a product. Brands have evolved to represent much more from the traditional quality, reliability, trust to consumers. Now they have become a source of realization, expression and identity. To attract the attention of the target market, advertisers have adopted celebrity endorsements as a strategy for marketing. The research reveals the popularity and growing acceptance of this strategy. The companies are using it to enhance their visibility or rescue and readjust their brand. Although the pitfalls of using such strategies cannot be ruled out. The ethical perspective from the consumers side remains unexplored and raises a doubt on the usage of such strategies to promote and endorse products. The aspects concerning celebrity endorsement revealed from the findings need to be explored from three perspectives ie. The Brand, the Endorser and the Consumer.

KEYWORDS– Customers, Brands, Celebrity Endorsements, Marketing, Marketing Communications, Marketing strategy

Introduction
Businesses have long sought to distract and attract the attention of potential customers that live in a world of ever-increasing commercial bombardment. Everyday consumers are exposed to thousands of voices and images in magazines, newspapers, and on billboards, websites, radio and television. Every brand attempts to steal at least a fraction of an unsuspecting person's time to inform him or her of the amazing and different attributes of the product at hand. The constant media saturation that most people experience daily, they eventually become numb to the standard marketing techniques. The challenge of the marketer is to find a hook that will hold the subject's attention. Also from a marketing communications perspective, it is vital that firms design strategies that help to underpin competitive differential advantage for the firm's product or services. In helping to achieve this, use of celebrity endorsers is a widely used marketing communication (marcom) strategy. Companies invest large sums of money to align their brands and themselves with endorsers. Such endorsers are seen as dynamic with both attractive and likeable qualities (Atkin and Block, 1983), and companies plan that these qualities are transferred to products via marcom activities (Langmeyer & Walker, 1991a, McCracken, 1989). Furthermore, because of their fame, celebrities serve not only to create and maintain attention but also to achieve high recall rates for marcom messages in today's highly cluttered environments (Croft et al, 1996,
Friedman and Friedman, 1979).

Literature Review
Endorsement is a channel of brand communication in which a celebrity acts as the brand’s spokesperson and certifies the brand’s claim and position by extending his/her personality, popularity, stature in the society or expertise in the field to the brand. In a market with a very high proliferation of local, regional and international brands, celebrity endorsement was thought to provide a distinct differentiation. A celebrity is defined as “an individual who is known to the public (i.e. Actor, sports figure, entertainer etc) for his or her achievements in areas other than that of the product class endorsed” (cf., Friedman and Friedman 1979). McCracken's (1989) definition of a celebrity endorser is, "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement (marcoms), is useful, because when celebrities are depicted in marcoms, they bring their own culturally related meanings, thereto, irrespective of the required promotional role." The use of celebrity endorsers is prevalent in advertising. In addition to the intuitive arguments that rationalize the practice, academic researchers have mounted empirical evidence to demonstrate the benefits of product endorsements. In today's dynamic and highly competitive business environment customers are becoming more demanding. Their expectations are continuously rising, with marketers continuing their efforts to meet them. In their creative advertising efforts marketers turn to celebrity endorsement to influence consumer brand choice behaviour. A celebrity is a well-known personality who enjoys public recognition by a large share of a certain group of people (Schlecht, 2003). Celebrities (e.g. Models, actors, television stars, artists and, sport athletes) are known to the public for their accomplishments in areas other than the product class endorsed (Friedman and Friedman, 1979). They usually enjoy high public recognition, and often have powerful influence upon endorsing products. They appear on television as spokespersons on behalf of the advertised brand, or ordinary users of such brand. In either way they often deliver a convincing message. They help increase awareness of advertised brands and create positive feelings towards them (Solomon, 2002). Eventually, this will positively affect customers' brand choice behaviour. The crescendo of celebrities endorsing brands has been steadily increasing over the past 20 years or so. Marketers overtly acknowledge the power of celebrity in influencing buyer's purchase decision. They have firm belief that likeability or a favourable attitude towards a brand is created by the use of a celebrity. This power is offered by the following elements, which also creates a 'Top of the Mind Position'.

• instant awareness, knowledge about the brand and easy recall
• values and image of the brand is defined, highlighted and refreshed by the celebrity
• the celebrity adds new edge and dimension to the brand
• credibility, trust, association, aspiration and connectivity to brand
• belief in efficiency and new appearance that will result in at least trial usage

Advertising professionals rely on the assumption that using a celebrity to endorse a brand will result in an increase in consumer recall of the brand. Advertisers believe that using a celebrity endorser will foster, in the mind of the consumer, a match or connection between the celebrity endorser and the endorsed brand. They can also help the company in reducing their expenditure on Media and other forms of publicity. Celebrities also create positive feelings towards brands, connect user to brand and are perceived by consumers as more entertaining. Using a celebrity in advertising or for any, other type of communication for brand building is likely to positively affect consumers’ brand preference, brand attitude, brand association and purchase intentions. To ensure positive results, however, it is critical for advertisers to have a clear understanding of consumer's reactions and
reinforcement of celebrity endorsement. The impact of celebrity endorsement on any brand as well as on consumer's purchase decision is very critical. Celebrity endorsement has become a popular approach in the branding procedure both in terms of gaining and keeping attention and in creating favourable associations leading to the brand knowledge and distinct brand images. The use of celebrity endorsements has increased to approximately 25% of all advertisements in the UK and US and approximately 70% of all advertisements in Japan. Pringle asserts that successful celebrity / brand partnerships have resulted in significant gains in income for brand owners. Celebrities need to have some special attributes because of which consumers would relate to them and purchase the products endorsed by these celebrities. Once they relate to the celebrities they become loyal towards the brands endorsed by them and start patronizing them. Research has shown that effective celebrities must be assessed against five essential attributes, usually referred to as 'TEARS' model (Shimp, 2003):

1. Trustworthiness: honesty, integrity, and believability of an endorser. It reflects the extent to which audience members trust and believe what celebrities say regarding the advertised brand.
2. Expertise: knowledge, experience, and skills of an endorser regarding the advertised brand. For example, a sport athlete is considered to be an expert when he/she endorses sport related products.
3. Attractiveness: all characteristics that make an endorser attractive to audience members (e.g. physical look, personality properties, attractive lifestyle, etc.).
4. Respect: refers to the quality of being admired or esteemed due to endorser's overall accomplishments.
5. Similarity: represents the extent to which an endorser matches target audience on characteristics related to the endorsement relationship (sex, age, lifestyle, etc.).

The TEARS model describes the essential qualities of celebrities that are important in determining their effectiveness in endorsement. Many studies described the positive effects of celebrities on consumer buying behaviour, such as the adoption of clothing styles, product choice, and health behaviours (Brown and Basil, 1995; Hoffner and Cantor, 1991). Research evidence revealed that the perceived image of celebrity endorsers had a positive impact on product buying behaviour (Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell, 2000; Mathur, Mathur, and Rangan, 1997, Ohanian, 1990). One study indicated that people of all ages emulated the appearance and behaviours of media celebrities they admired (Hoffner and Cantor, 1991). One study by Howard (2002) showed that female respondents in the U.S.A. were more responsive to celebrity endorsement (20%) than male respondents (16%). Frazer and Brown examined how audience members identified with celebrities, and how this affected their personal lives. They concluded that people selectively integrated the perceived values and behaviours they saw in celebrities they admired and adopted them into their own lives (Frazer and Brown, 2002). Pappas (1999), who examined the value of star power in an endorsement, indicated how a well-designed advertising helped celebrities convert their star power into brand equity. One study stressed the advantage of celebrity endorsement in enhancing product recognition and recall. The study maintained that consumers were likely to take more notice of celebrity advertisements and improve their level of product recall (Bowman, 2002).

Contra View:
Despite the preceding potential benefits, there are still many potential hazards in utilising celebrities as part of a marcoms campaign. Benefits of using celebrities can reverse markedly if they, for example, suddenly change image, drop in popularity, get into a situation of moral turpitude, lose credibility by over- endorsing, or overshadow endorsed products (Cooper 1984; Kaikati 1987). It has been found that negative information about a celebrity endorser not only influences consumers' perception of the celebrity, but also the endorsed product (Klebba and Unger 1982; Till and Shimp 1995). A common concern is that consumers will focus their attention on the celebrity and fail to
notice the brand being promoted (Rossiter and Fercy 1987). As Cooper (1984) puts it "the product not the celebrity, must be the star." Embarrassment has occurred for some companies when their spokesperson or celebrity has become embroiled in controversy (Hertz Corporation and OJ Simpson). Another important issue is that of celebrity' greed and subsequent overexposure when a celebrity becomes an endorser for many diverse products. According to Pringle: 'There is research to show that consumers lose confidence in celebrities who do too many things. If a celebrity says lots of things for lots of brands, this only reinforces the idea. Many studies were critical about the use of celebrity endorsement. One study examined the potential risks of overshadowing endorsed products. The study explored the common concern that consumers would focus their attention on the celebrity and fail to note the endorsed brand itself (Erdogan, Baker, and Tagg, 2001). Wells and Prensky (1996), who examined the issue of credibility, indicated that many consumers were sceptical of celebrities who were paid to provide positive information about endorsed brands. Other studies explored the issue of negative publicity associated with celebrity endorsers (Till and Shimp, 1998). To conclude, it is said that though there are numerous benefits of celebrity endorsements and it is an effective marketing tool, there are downsides to this tool as well. Most advertisers can't afford the millions of dollars it takes to ink a celebrity endorser. Celebrity endorsers are not only pricey, they're risky. Celebrity spokespeople are expensive and risky, and they don't always pay off. If the brand is in need of additional equity, instead of borrowing it from a celebrity, develop it independently.

*The reputation of the celebrity may derogate after he/she has endorsed the product. Since the behaviour of the celebrities reflects on the brand, celebrity endorsers may at times become liabilities to the brands they endorse.

*The vampire effect: This terminology pertains to the issue of a celebrity overshadowing the brand. If there is no congruency between the celebrity and the brand, then the audience will remember the celebrity and not the brand.

*Inconsistency in the professional popularity of the celebrity. The celebrity may lose his or her popularity due to some lapse in professional performances.

*Multi brand endorsements by the same celebrity would lead to overexposure. The novelty of a celebrity endorsement gets diluted if he does too many advertisements. This may be termed as commoditisation of celebrities, who are willing to endorse anything for money.

*Celebrities endorsing one brand and using another (competitor).

*Mismatch between the celebrity and the image of the brand. Celebrities manifest a certain persona for the audience. Each celebrity portrays a broad range of meanings, involving a specific personality and lifestyle.

**Objectives of research**

1. To study celebrity endorsement as a strategy for marketing
2. To study the reasons for usage of this strategy by marketers

**Design And Research Methodology**

This research is based on secondary data which has been collected from various websites, online journals, articles, books and magazines. The sample that is studied are FMCG companies the popular ones namely Pepsi, Coke, Nike, Provogue, LUX and Cadbury. The Study is based on data available from surveys about these FMCG majors. The information is collected and analysed in the findings below.

**Findings And Analysis**

The use of celebrity endorsers in advertising is wide-spread – as much as 20 percent of all
advertising use some type of celebrity endorser. Marketers invest significant dollars in securing the promotional support of well-known individuals. Friedman et al. (1977) found that celebrities are featured in 15 percent of the prime-time television commercials. In the United States, it was reported that about 20% of all television commercials feature a famous person, and about 10% of the dollars spent on television advertising are used in celebrity endorsement advertisements (Advertising Age, 1987; Sherman, 1985). Thus, celebrity endorsement has become a prevalent form of advertising in United States (Agrawal and Kamakura, 1995) and elsewhere. The first objective to study celebrity endorsement as a strategy for marketing has been achieved through the research that has been conducted. It has been proved that it has become a popular strategy for advertisers due to the increase in competition and to retain the consumers and make them brand loyal. It was not until the 1920s, however, that advertisers used famous people for product endorsements. The late 80's saw the beginning of celebrity endorsements in advertisements in India. The following companies are explored to study the reasons for using this strategy by marketers, Coke, Cadbury, Pepsi, Lux, Nike and Provogue

- A number of companies have used celebrities to overcome the crisis that their brands faced at some point in time. When Cadbury in India faced the worm – infestation controversy that erupted in 2004, the company turned to the famous Indian film personality. Though Cadbury vouched for its decades old quality and safety standards, the message was not getting through to the public. With the assuring personality of the celebrity, Cadbury's reputation by reinforcing the point that Cadbury had made tangible changes in packaging.

- A research group in India, the Centre for Science and Environment, an independent public interest group came out with their findings that soft drink manufactured by Coca – Cola contained harmful pesticide residue, the company responded by bringing in celebrity endorsement who appeared in an advertisement endorsing Coke's safety standards.

- Celebrity endorsements have been the bedrock of Pepsi's advertising. Over the years, Pepsi has used and continues to use a number of celebrities for general market and targeted advertising for their sub brands

- Nike is also very well known for another aspect and that is its consistent use of celebrities to endorse the brand. In fact one of the most successful collaborations between a brand and a celebrity is that of Nike and Michael Jordan. The successful collaboration that Nike and Jordan launched a new brand variant called the Air Jordan line of sport shoes. Nike golf balls, since the company signed a celebrity in 1996, have seen a $50 million revenue growth. Nike's golf line grossed more than $250 million in annual sales. In 2000 the celebrity renegotiated a five-year contract estimated at $125 million.

- The use of celebrity endorsements is a popular way to differentiate among similar products when consumers do not perceive many actual differences among the products competitive set as well as during the mature stage of the product’s life cycle. An example of celebrity endorsements used in this way can be seen by examining recent ads from both Pepsi and Coca-Cola. Both have seemingly run out of things to say about their products so they rely heavily on celebrity endorsements

- One of the most successful celebrity endorsement campaign which reflects the fit between the brand and the 360 degree advertising fit is a bollywood celebrity and Provogue. Provogue's positioning in the apparel market is of a young, active, party-going, attention-grabbing brand and so is the celebrity. The conjunction between the two has been immensely impactful and brand managers have utilised this endorsement through 360 degree reinforcement. Provogue Lounge and extensive phased insertions in print in selective publications reaching out to their target audience has made it as one of the highest recalled celebrity endorsement.
Since the inception of Lux in India, it is known for its celebrity endorsements. Lux, the Beauty Bar of the Stars. Lux has repositioned itself from being a women's soap to a soap for the men. For this also they have used a male celebrity to endorse the product to appeal to the target audiences. The responses have been not as expected by the company.

The latest trend in India is to rope in celebrities for social causes like AIDS, Polio etc. This has had a positive effect on the consumers as celebrities rule over their minds. Any awareness campaign endorsed by the celebrities has received high levels of penetration and overwhelming response.

Celebrity endorsements work really well in the Indian scenario as consumers relate to them and follow them.

A celebrity endorsing multiple brands clutters the minds of the consumers and the strategy of using a celebrities to promote a brand or reposition it or create brand loyal customer fails eventually from the sales perspective.

Suggestions and recommendations:
The current research findings suggest that advertisement makers and specialists are highly recommended to keep in mind the following points-

- Strategically plan and select the celebrity, it will enable the company to relate to the global target audience keeping in mind the life cycle stage of the celebrity. The celebrity should have high recognition, high positive effect and high appropriateness to the product
- Celebrity endorsements would be more effective if they are consistently used over time to create the link between the brand and the celebrity
- Celebrity endorsement would be more effective when using a celebrity who is not strongly associated with another product or service
- Celebrity endorsements can be used to reinforce or create an image for a product or brand even when the brand is not a famous one.
- It is important to have a celebrity whose impression and image is positive for the target audience
- Celebrity endorsement as a strategy works well in the Indian market but the magnitude of the effect varies from the celebrity who is endorsing to the product that is being promoted
- Consumers are not able to recall the brand endorsed by celebrities who are seen in multiple advertisements
- Celebrity endorsements will be more effective for brands for which consumers have limited knowledge
- Celebrities are used to avert the crisis of brand reputation
- Celebrities can play a more strategic role for their brands, not only endorsing a product but also helping to design, position and sell merchandise and services

Conclusion
Celebrity endorsement strategy can be an effective competition weapon in mature markets in order to differentiate products from competitors' since there is heavy advertising clutter. Celebrities have always been the easiest way to attract the customers because of their mass appeal. Though there are
some downsides to celebrity endorsements, they do influence the target audience and make them loyal towards the brand. Celebrities help advertisements stand out from the surrounding clutter, thus improving their communicative ability. A celebrity therefore is a means to an end, and not an end in themselves. In terms of the future, celebrity endorsements are here to stay. However the research into various aspects of endorsement will lead to conclusive results and analysis.

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