



CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT IN ADVERTISING: EMERGING AVENUES AND IMPORTANCE

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Abstract:

The benefits of using endorsement of a product by a celebrity are well-known. People tend to buy/adopt products more which are used by or are projected to be used by any celebrity as compared to a common advertiser. Endorsements are an easy way for a brand to attach themselves to the positive (or negative, if the brand has an angle on it) feelings associated with a celebrity or industry professional. The paper deciphers the advantages and recent trends by use of celebrity endorsement in advertising industry.

Key Words: Celebrity, Endorsement, Consumer & Advertising

Introduction:

Celebrities are individuals who enjoy public recognition and who use this recognition on behalf of a consumer by appearing with it in an advertisement (McCracken, 1998). According to Friedman and Friedman (1979), a celebrity endorser is an individual who is known to the public for his or her achievements in areas other than that of the product class endorsed. Advertisers sometimes develop and use fictitious characters to serve as endorsers for their brand. These fictitious characters can also be classified as celebrities. Examples of these characters are actors, actresses, fantasy creations, or even animal personifications. The term celebrity itself do not exclude individuals who may be controversial or disliked by the general population, as long as they are used carefully to convey a certain image (Tellis, 1998).

Origin:

There have been hundreds of thousands of examples of endorsement advertising over the last hundred years. From athletes and movie stars, to doctors and mechanics, endorsements are a major part of the advertising and PR industries. And with a good reason. When a product or service chooses to align itself with someone famous, or an expert in their field, they are taking a shortcut to recognition, good will, and credibility. For instance, we may never have given a second thought to a certain brand of cereal, or toothpaste, or 4-cylinder AWD car. But when someone we know comes out and says we should buy it, it's on our radar. In other words, endorsements are an easy way for a brand to attach themselves to the positive (or negative, if the brand has an angle on it) feelings associated with a celebrity or industry professional. In laymen's terms, endorsements are a specific type of advertising that employs a celebrity or other professional to say good things about the product or service. In fact, that person is lending his or her name, and the equity that comes with it, to the brand.

Types of Endorsement:

There are different types of endorsements, mostly paid (but sometimes free, especially for charity), that brands have available to them. Using the Product of Service this is perhaps the most common in sports and fashions. For example, Sachin Tendulkar and M. S. Dhoni are paid a huge amount to be seen wearing Nike shoes. Medical brands pay esteemed physicians, dentists, doctors and other medical professionals to tell the world that they use a specific product. In all cases, the advertiser work with PR firms to make sure the endorsement is seen by millions of people and this in turn marks them a recognition.

- ✓ **Paid Appearing:** Appearing in ads for a product or service is another popular way for brands to use endorsements. Sometimes celebrities also opt for endorsing products outside their nation.
- ✓ **Unpaid Testimonials:** Advertisers have the choice of paying someone to write or say something that can endorse the brand, but it's even better when that testimonial is completely free. This can happen in a few ways. A famous blogger, You Tuber, professional, or celebrity, can say something great about the brand. If a blogger gives a restaurant or salon a glowing review, it can see its business boom.
- ✓ **Fake Endorsements:** This is not to imply anything illegal going on. It is simply referring to the kinds of endorsements that come from actors who are "paid spokespersons." They appear as families explaining how wonderful the product is, or are "medical professionals" wearing white coats talking about the great product or service on offer. They have to be identified as actors in these commercials, even if they are speaking the words of a real family or doctor, and therefore the power of this kind of endorsement is much weaker than the other three. Very few people watch an ad featuring an actor and think the product will be as good as it's stated.
- ✓ **In-Effective Celebrity Endorsements:** When a consumer thinks about the brand, they also think about the endorser and evaluate the brand based on their opinion of the endorser. Therefore, there is a financial implication as endorsement may boost sales and improve consumer awareness and brand

recognition. For instance, the return of celebrity basketball player Michael Jordan to the NBA in 1995, caused the stock value of brands that he had been endorsing to improve. Unfortunately, the personal experiences, emotions, and associations involved in formulating consumer opinions can be complex and difficult to influence.

Endorsement Deals: The Risks

Endorsements tie two brands together. One brand being an actual product or service, and the other being a personal brand, from a movie or TV star, musician, or industry professional. And once those two are tied together, things can get messy if anything goes wrong with either brand. Should anything negative happen to the person endorsing the brand, the brand itself can be put in a bind very quickly. We only have to look at the issues that Tiger Woods created for the brand he endorsed. In these instances, a crack PR and legal team is needed to stop the bleeding immediately. Similarly, Danger to the Endorser can also take place. Should a brand come under fire for doing something wrong, the famous person endorsing it can become tarnished quickly, unless they move fast to remove themselves from the relationship. If it is discovered a company is using sweatshops, engaging in false advertising, or is flat out breaking the law, that could easily tarnish the reputation of the endorser. Thus the cases are vice-versa and interdependent.

Advantages:

There are a number of advantages to using celebrities in advertising, whether you are running print, Internet, radio or television commercials. The key for small companies is making sure the local celebrity is relevant and has broad appeal. Popular celebrities often work best because they naturally generate lots of attention. However, despite their following, celebrities are most effective if they promote products or services they are most likely to use. In other words, they must be plausible consumers, such as a local newscaster wearing a business suit from an area men's store.

- ✓ **Influence Consumer Purchases:** The affinity consumers have for certain celebrities can greatly influence their purchases. People may have the attitude, "If the product is good enough for her, it's good enough for me." This philosophy is often the impetus behind advertisements for makeup, skin creams, hair products and attire. Consumers want the wavy hair of a local celebrity, for example. Hence, they purchase the brand that the celebrity uses to achieve her hair's fullness and bounce. Local consumers may also desire the same soft drink as their team's best baseball player. Essentially, the testimonial of the local celebrity adds instant credibility to a small company's product.
- ✓ **Build Awareness:** Celebrities in advertising build brand awareness, according to "Supermarket News," a publication covering the food distribution industry. And they build it much more quickly than traditional types of advertising. Brand awareness measures the percentage of people who are familiar with a particular brand. Small businesses spend lots of money and time for exposure to incrementally increase brand awareness among consumers. The use of a local celebrity can do much to enhance consumers' awareness and understanding of what a small business offers.
- ✓ **Position a Brand:** Some small companies use celebrities in advertising to position their brands. Product positioning is placing a company's products in the best possible light in the minds of a target group, according to Inc.com. For example, a small investment firm may use a well-respected and retired local disc jockey to market a retirement plan for people ages 50 and over. The fact that the disc jockey falls in the consumers' age group and has a good reputation in the community makes the company's product and message more believable.
- ✓ **Attract New Users:** One challenge small companies face is finding new users for their products. Local celebrities in advertising appeal to customers as well as those who have never tried the brand. The latter may be users of competitive brands. However, those who continually see the local celebrity in a commercial for a certain product may be convinced to try the product.
- ✓ **Breathe Life Into Failing Brand:** The use of a celebrity in an advertisement may also help to breathe life into a failing brand. For example, a small soap manufacturer might think about dropping a brand or product, especially if production and overhead costs are leaving little or no profit. However, the use of a celebrity to tout the benefits of the brand could help create new interest and excitement in consumers.

Inference:

These days, almost all advertisements in India feature a celebrity in order to reinforce and enhance the trustworthiness of their messages, making endorsement an essential global marketing tool. Although celebrity endorsement has become a key component of marketing, it does have potential drawbacks, such as the lack of credibility and inappropriate behaviour of representative celebrities; hence the use is a bit risky too. Most importantly, brands must identify the appropriate brand ambassador: an ambassador that represents and emulates their brand values, and that their target audience will relate to. Efforts to be made so that brands can identify a celebrity that will add-value to their marketing communications. In short, brands must seek out celebrities with positive associations in the mind of their target customers, but they must also be aware of the potential risks of this.

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