

The Impact of Celebrity Endorsement on the Youth of Pakistan

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Abstract. The use of celebrity endorsement has become an ever-present feature in modern advertising. Celebrities like movie actors, television stars, and famous athletes are widely used in television advertisements to influence consumers' brand choice behavior. Advertisers try to establish a link between their brands and a desirable image or lifestyle of a celebrity. Like other parts of the world, celebrity endorsements have become a commonly used technique of promotion in Pakistan. This study attempted to examine the perceptions of youth towards the use of celebrities in advertisements in Pakistan to get an insight about its effectiveness. Data was collected through a questionnaire from 150 students residing in Peshawar and Islamabad. Results show that celebrity endorsement has the potential of being noticed and liked by the viewers but it does not influence the purchase decision. The purchase decision has been found to be influenced by other factors like quality and price of the product.

Key words: Celebrity, Endorsement, Pakistan, Advertising, Creativity

1. Introduction

Today, the modern marketing strategy of most business firms relies heavily on advertising to promote their products to their target markets. The major goal of advertising strategy is to influence customers, who are becoming increasingly educated, sophisticated and selective. Competition is also becoming more intense. Having a good product alone is not enough to compete in markets of high standards. The use of celebrity endorsement advertising has become an ever-present feature in modern advertising.

Celebrity endorsement occurs when an individuals who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement [1]. Celebrities like movie actors, television stars, and famous athletes are widely used in television advertisements to influence consumers' brand choice behavior. Advertisers try to establish a link between their brands and a desirable image or lifestyle of a celebrity. Reference [2] classifies endorsers into three broad groups, that is, experts, lay endorsers and celebrities. An expert is defined to be a person who is assumed to be having command over a specific discipline of interest to a particular segment. Experts are chosen on the basis of their knowledge pertaining to particular field and their opinion is considered to be highly valuable in that field. Lay endorsers can be real and fictitious characters to whom normal people can associate themselves. These are ordinary people who are not selected because of their charming personality or their authoritative attributes which makes normal people relate to these seemingly ordinary individuals [3].

Celebrity endorsement today is the ultimate and ideal promotional strategy for marketers as the consumers get attracted towards those brands that reflect their inner lives, values, beliefs and most importantly their desires. Consumers want to improve their self image by opting for those brands which have relevant meanings to their self-concept.

Reference [4] argues that a brand at its introductory phase has no perception, it has no associations and relations, and in simple words it has no personality. But when a celebrity is attached to the brand, the product and the company gets immediate recognition, charisma, and charm. The brand turns to a human from a non-living being.

Reference [1] examined that celebrities have their own characteristics that they employ to the brands and ultimately to the consumers. The celebrities transport their representative meanings to endorsed products. He

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further argues that celebrities are famous people who offers their lifestyle and personality which cannot be matched by anonymous people. They have the potential of assigning extra depth, power and delicacy to the brand. Hence, he concludes that celebrity endorsement is more effective than non-celebrity endorsement.

Reference [5] argues that celebrity is used to make the consumer aware of the product so the consumer goes and buys the product. Once the consumer becomes aware of the product, however, it's the design, quality and price of the product that influences their buying behavior and not celebrity endorsing it. Celebrities do not change the buying behavior of the consumers but just helps in making them aware of the product.

An appropriately used celebrity can prove to be a massively influential tool that magnifies the effects of a campaign. Reference [5] further argues that if the companies want their brand to be perceived positively by the consumers so they need to conduct an inclusive evaluation of the characteristics, traits and attributes of the celebrity. There should be a match between the brand endorsed, the celebrity and the target market.

To explain the compatibility factor of the brand and the celebrity, reference [6] shapes his argument that celebrity needs to match the product and communicate credibility and inspirational values to a brand. For a successful campaign the prerequisite is that the idea behind the campaign should be a unique one and there should be a match between the celebrity and the message conveyed. Celebrities will generate attention, recall and positive attitudes towards advertising only if there is lucid fit between the celebrity and the brand. But the celebrity endorsement is ineffective when it comes to the purchase intentions and actual sales because it is the core product and quality of the product that the consumers consider while purchasing the product.

Finally, reference [6] mentions some unique advantages and disadvantages which celebrities bring with them. Establishment of credibility ensured attention, PR coverage, higher degree of recall and mass appeal to name a few of the advantages. Whereas reputation of the celebrity may derogate after he/she has endorsed a brand, the vampire effect, celebrities endorsing one brand and using the other (competitor) and most importantly a mismatch between the celebrity and the image of the brand.

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Sometimes the celebrities overshadow the brand that is being endorsed that is why many companies have stopped using big names for endorsing the products. The best example that the author quotes is of Pepsi. Pepsi finished deals with singers like Beyonce Knowles and Britney Spears because they drew away attention from the brand.

Endorsement by a celebrity has a meaningful influence on young people's evaluation of ads and products [7]. Celebrity endorsement has been an extensively applied marketing tool in the international developed industries and it has proven to be contributing positively towards the economic growth of the brands. However the effectiveness of this tool has been subjected to many criticisms due to its vast application in diverse fields. Even developing industries like that of Pakistan have started using this marketing tool for the promotion and better positioning of their products and thus to better appeal to the different segments. After conducting several perceptual analyses, the developed countries have started evaluating the benefits associated with this type of promotional tool using complex quantitative methods and models to measure the economic benefits associated with celebrity endorsements. The current Pakistani market despite using these methods have lagged far behind in developing tools to evaluate the costs and benefits associated with celebrity endorsements. The main problem therefore is the obvious use of celebrity intensive campaigns without gauging the benefits associated with using such tools. For this purpose, the perception of the Pakistani market regarding celebrities endorsing different brands across different industries is a valuable concern. Thus, this research is conducted to examine the perceptions of youth towards the use of celebrities in advertisements in Pakistan to get an insight about its effectiveness. The following research question was therefore, addressed in the study.

2. Research Question

How does celebrity endorsement impact the perception of youth?

3. Methodology

This is a descriptive study which aimed at examining the impact of celebrity endorsement on the perceptions of youth in Pakistan. To achieve this objective of the study, the following methodology was used.

3.1. Instrument

The data was collected through a personally administered questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of ten items using a five point Likert scale (1= Strongly Agree to 5= Strongly Disagree) and some close-ended using nominal scales. The content validity of the questionnaire was assessed through academic experts at the Institute of Management Sciences, Peshawar. The questionnaire was further pretested on ten young students to detect potential problems in the questionnaire

3.2. Sample & Procedure

The target population of the study comprised of the educated youth residing in the cities of Islamabad and Peshawar. It included both male and female and their ages were in the range of fifteen and thirty. A sample of 150 respondents was selected from the target population through the convenience sampling method.

4. Data Analysis

The collected questionnaires were first checked to see if there were any incomplete questionnaires. However, since the questionnaires were distributed and collected personally by the researcher himself or in few cases through the individuals designated by the researcher, no incomplete questionnaires were found. Next, all the questions were coded and the data was entered into the computer for analysis. The data was then analyzed through Chi-Square and One-Sample T- Test by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

5. Results

The results of the One-Sample T-Test and Chi-Square Test are given below:

Table 1 Results of One-Sample T-Test

Item	Mean	St. Deviation	T value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Celebrity in an advertisement encourages to buy the product	2.55	1.138	-4.806	0.000
Celebrities make difference to the image of the brand	2.23	0.970	-9.761	0.000
Celebrities use the product they endorse	3.61	1.061	7.002	0.000
People purchase celebrity endorsed brands to improve social status	3.26	1.217	2.615	0.010
Celebrity has the power to change my perceptions	3.09	1.152	0.921	0.358
Celebrity conveys all the true features of a product	3.77	0.998	9.494	0.000
Celebrity holds the viewer's attention	1.82	0.927	-15.584	0.000
Refrain from the product because I don't like the celebrity who endorses it	3.51	1.028	6.116	0.000
Purchase product because it is endorsed by my favourite celebrity	3.12	1.198	1.227	0.222
Scandals attached with celebrities destroy the brand's image	2.37	0.909	-8.444	0.000

The result of the item "Celebrities in advertisement encourages buying the product" shows that if respondents get their desired celebrities, then they are likely to purchase the product. The Mean value of 2.55 suggests that the respondents agree with statement.

The result of the item "Celebrities make difference to the brand image" shows that the respondents do think that celebrities can make up the image or break it up. Celebrities can have a positive and successful image in the minds of the customers as the Mean value is 2.23. Thus stars add significant value to brands.

The result of the item "Celebrities use the products they endorse" shows that a large majority of respondents disagree as the Mean calculated is 3.61 and they are of the view that celebrities do not use the

products that they endorse. We can see a sense of untrustworthiness and information consumers have. Such actions make the consumer believe that it's all about money for the celebrities. Thus it can be concluded that celebrities can popularize brands but can also lack integrity if they are perceived negatively, such as not using or believing in the endorsed product.

The Mean of the responses to item “purchasing celebrity endorsed brands improve social status” is 3.26 which means that the respondents disagree that purchasing a celebrity endorsed brand will improve their social status.

Respondents have neutral response to the item that celebrities have the power to change their perception about the product. This is suggested by the Mean of the responses which is 3.09.

Respondents disagree with the fact that a celebrity conveys all the truth features of the product. It can be concluded that building the trust to the advertised product can only depend on after trying the product and confirming the quality and value of the product. The respondents do not solely trust the celebrity endorsed commercials without experience of the product.

Respondents strongly agree that a celebrity holds viewers attention. This is suggested by the mean value of 1.82. The attitude of the respondents in the sample conveyed that celebrities matter a great deal to them. Hence celebrities got voted as having more potential to attract attention. Respondents voiced that it is because of the presence of these celebrities that the product is noticed and remembered by the consumers.

Respondents disagree that they will refrain from purchasing a product only because a celebrity they don't like endorses it. This shows that celebrities don't act as deterrents.

Respondents had a neutral response when asked if their favourite celebrity in an advertisement encourages them to buy the product. The result indicates that celebrities do not have significant influence on the purchase decisions made by adolescents.

The Mean of 2.37 indicates that a respectable number of respondents were in support of the fact that scandals attached to the celebrity destroys the brand image and credibility as it tends to leave a depressing impact on their minds. The celebrity may lose his or her popularity due to some lapse in professional performances or due to scandals attached to them which ultimately will destroy the image of the brand he/she is endorsing.

The result of the question asked to identify the factor considered most important by the respondents in an advertisement is given in Table 2 below. The table shows, that creativity leads as the most important characteristic in an advertisement. Information (22.7%) and humor (19.3%) follow closely.

Table 2 The Most Important Factor in an Advertisement

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Humor	29	19.3
Celebrity	16	10.7
Creativity	71	47.3
Information	34	22.7
Total	150	100

An important observation over here is that celebrities (10.7%) are perceived to be the least important factor in ads. They believe that only those commercials, which are more innovative, have creative and fresh ideas, and have detail information can be more attractive, no matter a celebrity endorsing the product or not.

6. Discussion & Conclusion

Based on the findings of the data collected from the youth population of Peshawar and Islamabad, it can be concluded that celebrity endorsement has a potential of being noticed and liked by the viewers. It is evident from the study that celebrity does catch the attention of consumers and that the main purpose of a celebrity endorsement is making the product popular, so that people may recognize it easily and it is because of the presence of these celebrities that the product is noticed and remembered by the consumers. The brand stands out from the rest of the brands and facilitates instant awareness if celebrity endorsement is used effectively. But it plays a very minute role in final decision making for buying a new product.

People get influenced by creative advertisements and not just with the presence of celebrity and if they get both celebrities and advertisements with creative script than it will be a success. Those commercials, which are more innovative, have creative and fresh ideas, and have detail information can be more attractive, no matter a celebrity endorsing the product or not.

The results also support the view that a profound number of consumers were not in favor that the celebrities were in the habit of using the products which they endorse and the consumer believe that it's all about money for the celebrities. The respondents do not trust the celebrity endorsed commercials without experience of the product. The result indicates that celebrities do not influence the purchase decisions made by adolescents.

Respondents are of the view that celebrities in ads divert their focus of from the product and take the attention in the advertisement thus overshadowing the product that is being endorsed. The research reveals that the celebrity may lose his or her popularity due to downfall in professional performances or due to any wrong perceptions attached to the celebrity or due to scandals attached to them which might ultimately destroy the image of the brand he/she is endorsing.

It has been proved from the discussion that celebrity endorsements is a very powerful and useful tool. People love and adore their favourite celebrities and advertisers should use stars to capitalize on these feelings to influence the fans towards their brand. When taking into consideration the choice of which celebrity to use as endorser, marketers must recognize the pros and cons of using celebrity endorsers. It is important that there should be congruency between the persona of the celebrity and the image of the brand. Thus it is concluded that celebrity should be carefully selected that matches the target segment and brand values. There remains no doubt that celebrity endorsement can be an efficient tool to build and maintain a brand if managed correctly. If handled incorrectly, it can be disastrous.

7. Suggestions for Future Research

This study has focused only on young consumers within the age bracket 15-35 years; future research can be undertaken targeting different age groups in Pakistan which would probably bring to light different perceptions regarding the topic in hand.

Further research could also examine the effects of different endorsers across different media, especially television, print or radio.

8. References

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