

An Exploratory Study of Celebrity Endorsements

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Abstract—In an attempt to communicate the merits of their products or brand, advertisers have often chosen to use endorsement as a promotional strategy. In this paper, an attempt has been made to trace the effect of a celebrity (Shahrukh Khan), on building a relationship in terms of congruity between the brand personality and consumer personality. The research furthers the theoretical perspective by introducing an instrument based on the 42 adjectives of Aaker's (1997) scale. Based on the affective and cognitive theories to explain endorsement efficiency, the congruence between the mean values of the brand being endorsed (Omega watch) and that of the targeted celebrity against the mean value of the endorser was being tested. The results proved that successful brand promotion needs congruency between the brand's and the endorser's personality, though it may be moderate.

Keywords: *celebrity endorsement, brand personality, congruence.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the last 10 years it has been seen that the Indian marketing environment has drastically changed. Many new ideas and concepts of brand promotions are evolving. One method of breaking through this promotional clutter is to use an effective celebrity endorser in advertisements. Endorsers are more effective when consumers believe that celebrities are motivated by a genuine liking of the product rather than by endorsement earnings. Celebrity endorsement today has been defined as: "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement" (McCracken, 1989, p.311). Research has shown that the use of celebrities in advertisements can have a positive influence on the credibility, message recall, memory and likeability of the advertisements and finally on purchase intentions (Menon, 2001; Pornpitakpan, 2003; Pringle and Binet, 2005; Roy, 2006).

In the advertising industry this truth is well established that Shahrukh has excellent PR skills and he knows where to win love and in which way. He evolved from an actor into a brand name and eventually, he became the Omega brand ambassador. OMEGA has established an unrivalled reputation for precision, endurance and leading-edge technology and has received the most coveted awards for aesthetics and design.

However, the outcome of this study, admittedly preliminary, will provide marketers and advertising practitioners some evidence regarding investments they make while choosing celebrities by getting deep insight into the role played by celebrity in the advertising world.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study will probe into some issue as:

- A. To understand how the consumers perceive celebrities and the brands they endorse;
- B. To understand the concept of congruency between the personalities of brand with that of the brand they endorse;
- C. To understand the effects of congruity in the process of advertisement and how the presence of celebrity endorsers affects this congruity.

III. THE THEORETICAL CONTEXT

- A. Mishra and Betty's work (1990, p.161), for the first time defined congruency in the field of celebrity.
- B. Research indicates when consumers make brand choices about products; they are making lifestyle statements since they are buying into not only an image but also an emotional relationship (Urde 1999; Williams 2002).
- C. Walker et al. (1992) suggest that it may be easier to establish a product image with an initial celebrity endorsement than it is to change a product image that is already associated with a celebrity or is well-established through some other means.
- D. According to Misra and Betty (1990) and Kamins and Gupta (1994) congruency between an endorser (celebrity) and a brand has generally (and logically) been considered to have a positive impact on a brand's image.

E. Congruency between the celebrity and the product in terms of characteristics such as image, expertise or attractiveness) plays an important role for the effectiveness of the advertisement and an optimal match between the celebrity endorser and the product is therefore crucial. (Till and Busler, 1998, 2000, Baker and Churchill, 1977, Kahle and Homer, 1985).

IV. METHODOLOGY

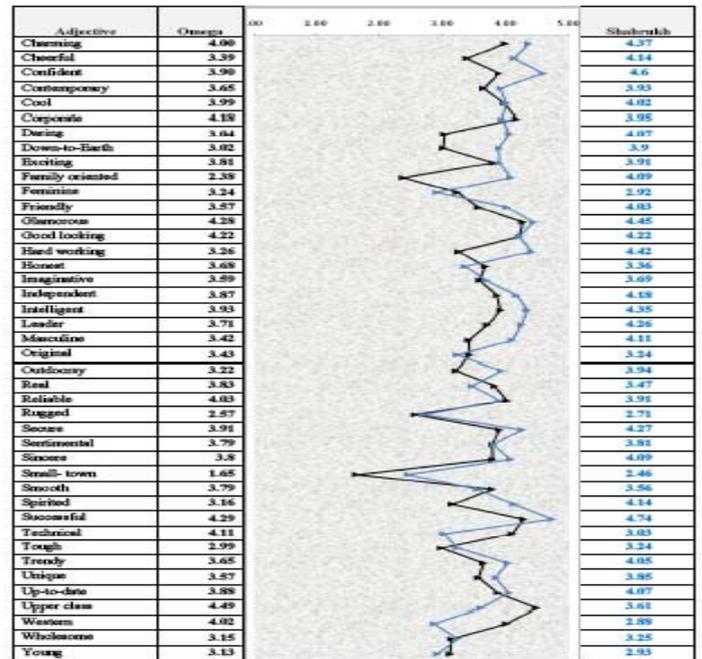
Both the celebrity and the brand were evaluated based on eight personality dimensions, as enunciated by Aaker (1997). The dimensions are: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness. Respondents ranked the celebrity and the brand on a likert scale on each personality trait. The measurement was done against a brand (Omega) and another brand as 'Shahrukh Khan'. The measurement of the congruence between Shahrukh Khan's personality and other brands' personality was the objective. A judgmental sampling was taken into account. 100 respondents around the age group of 18-30 years, mostly comprising of students were chosen for data collection, because in this group, the probability of finding respondents, who were aware of the brands, was quite high. A structured questionnaire was developed containing a single question asking respondents to rank 42 adjectives (based on Aaker's scale).

A. Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis was done by finding out the means (based on Aaker's brand personality traits) with the help of responses collected through hundred sampling instruments. Graphs were drawn comparing the means related to the brand with the mean of various traits of Shahrukh Khan. Fig. 2 depicts graphically as well as numerically the comparison between Omega's personality and Shahrukh's personality, it can be seen that there are a number of adjectives (traits of personality) where the respective means are quite close. The overall mean distribution across all 42 adjectives hints

towards close congruency between the brand and the endorser.

Fig 2: Mean response to comparison between Omega's and Shahrukh's personality



By looking at the graph carefully we can find out several adjectives where the means are significantly close. Table 1 shows the differences in means for adjectives which are very close.

TABLE 1. DIFFERENCE IN MEANS (OMEGA)

Adjective	Good Looking	Cool	Sentimental	Exciting	Imaginative	Reliable	Rugged	Wholesome
Difference in means	.00	.02	.02	.10	.10	.12	.14	.10

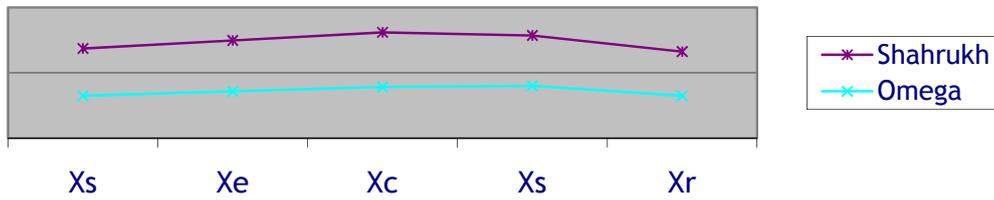
After studying the means of the brands, it was found that brand Omega has great affinity with that of the endorser Shahrukh Khan.

TABLE 2. BRAND PERSONALITY DIMENSIONS-MEAN TABLE.

Brand Name	Xs	Xe	Xc	Xs	Xr
Omega	3.24	3.58	3.92	4.00	3.24
Shahrukh Khan	3.62	3.89	4.17	3.85	3.38

Here, Xs=mean for sincerity, Xe= mean for excitement, Xc= mean for competence, Xs= mean for sophistication, Xr= mean for ruggedness.

Graph1: Comparing variations in brand personalities

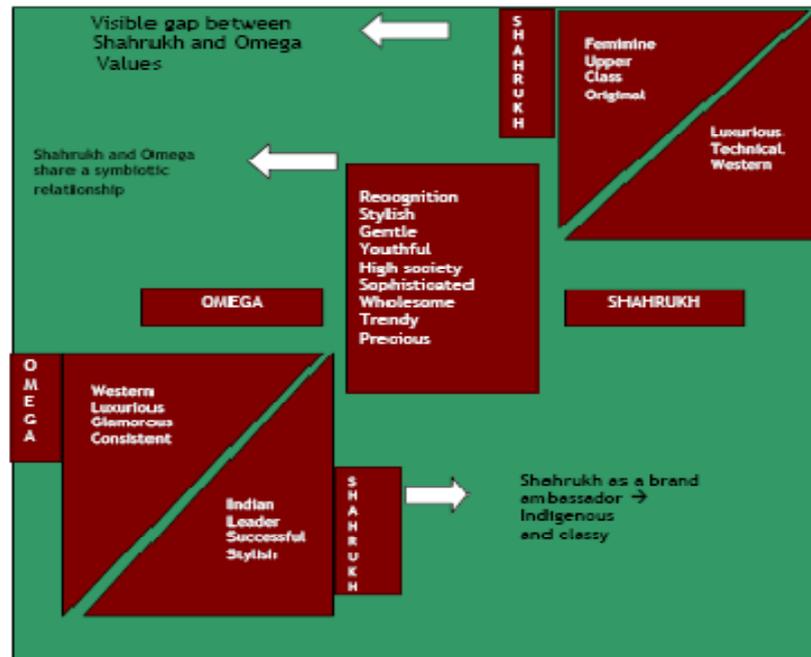


(Note: Xs, Xe, Xc, Xs, Xr have same meaning as in table1)

Fig.3 shows a framework as how certain personality traits of Shahrukh and Omega have worked in synergy and helped in establishing Omega as an established brand. It also shows difference in values that Shahrukh’s personality carry in comparison to that of Omega.

Framework of differences between Shahrukh and The brand

Fig. 3: Comparison between Shahrukh-Omega



B. Conclusion & Limitations

This study offers interesting propositions about celebrities and celebrity-endorsed branding. Our research shows that congruence between a celebrity and a brand is an important concept, while considering the pre attitude toward the ad featuring a celebrity endorsing a brand. In a narrow sense the objective of our study was to give empirical evidence for the general believe that, Endorser and the Brand must have congruence between their personalities. The targeted endorser in our study, i.e., Shahrukh Khan is having a successful association with the chosen brand of our study

i.e., Omega. It was tested (empirically) whether this fit has anything to do with the congruence between their personalities. In this study we have found that the targeted endorser i.e., Shahrukh Khan’s personality has quite close congruence with the brand under study. From these findings we can safely conclude that congruence between endorser’s and brand’s personality is quite important for converting a product/service into a brand, for making a brand more successful and for making a brand enter successfully in a new market. Nevertheless, Shahrukh Khan has proved as a successful endorser of the brand, both in terms of increase in familiarity of the brand and its acceptance by the consumer in a highly competitive segment.

However certain limitations are inevitable as the data collection was conducted on a sample of the target population, consisting a sample of 100 respondents. Therefore, the findings of this study are quite restricted. Moreover, the study was restricted to a particular brand. Other studies should focus on other product categories. Also, another major limitation lies in the domain of area of the study, wherein, the respondents of a small town were included and so there may be difference in perceptions among respondents as compared to consumers in big or metropolitan cities. This study points to the possibility of extending research in the celebrity endorsement area.

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