

Celebrity Endorsements in an Indian Perspective : A Review

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Abstract

The use of celebrities as endorsers is an important concept of the modern marketing strategy for brand promotions. Celebrity endorsements increase the sales and mutually benefit organizations/brands, the celebrities themselves, and the advertisement companies that produce attractive, influencing, and mind blowing advertisements. The impact of a celebrity endorsement is affected by a number of factors including the image and popularity of a celebrity, a proper match between a product and a celebrity, the attractiveness of the advertisement, and the frequency of the advertisement in electronic and print media. The role of the celebrity endorsement in affecting brand value, consumers' behaviour toward purchasing, match and mismatch between a celebrity and a brand, and the various advantages and disadvantages of the concept of celebrity endorsement were discussed in this paper.

Keywords: celebrity endorsement, positive impact, negative impact, factors, advertisements

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For the grand success of a business, a number of marketing and publicity strategies are employed nowadays. In addition to the strategic plans, many tactics and tools are also used usually for the promotion of the products and brands (Dholakia & Sternthal, 1977). Implementation of an effective strategy should be specific, measurable, actionable, time-related, and relevant. The most effective one now is considered as a promotional strategy to draw the attention of the consumers towards products and product qualities (Laldinliana, 2012). The primary goal behind each and every promotional strategy is to increase the revenue of the companies through spreading awareness, community building, and publicity. The most common promotional strategy tools involve social media, consumer referral incentive programs, product sample giveaways, sales promotions and discounts, sponsoring the events involving masses, and through advertisements (Baker & Churchill Jr., 1977). Among all these promotional strategies, advertising the product is considered to be a powerful tool for a brand to win market share. It is a form of communication designed to prompt potential consumers to buy products or services, overwhelm others through high-cost electronic media such as TV, radio, newspaper, and magazine advertisements, and through other economical ways such as hoardings in public places.

Celebrity endorsements is one of the most effective and universal methods accepted worldwide for advertising strategies (Biswas, Hussain, & O'Donnell, 2009). A celebrity is a famous and well-known individual and is widely recognized in the society and draws ample attention of the public and media (Erdogan, 1999 ; White, 2004). A celebrity can be a film star, sports personality, model, national and international award winner, and even a politician. It is believed that celebrity endorsements influence the effectiveness of marketing strategies and result in fast connection with the consumers. This stimulates the customers to choose a brand with a competitive edge (Bhattacharya & Roy, 2014). In an Indian perspective, about 50% of commercial ads portray celebrities. Celebrity endorsements increase the sales and mutually benefit a company, a celebrity, as well as the advertisement

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companies producing attractive, influencing, and mind blowing advertisements. In the present age of thriving media, the celebrity endorsement share in the endorsement world was about 65% in the Indian market, 45% in the Chinese, and 35% in Western markets (Aggarwal, 2015). The overall effect of employing celebrities and advertisement companies for endorsements is the increased price of products.

A number of studies have been carried out to ascertain the impact of celebrity endorsements in the Indian context. Many of these studies correlate the image of the celebrity endorser with the brand. However, in the present scenario, when hundreds of brands are entering and are mushrooming in the market every day, a number of examples can be quoted where the brand quality has drastically affected the image of the celebrity endorser. It is thus very important to examine the various factors for increasing the effectiveness and credibility of a celebrity endorsement, and advantages/disadvantages of the celebrity endorsement in the present times.

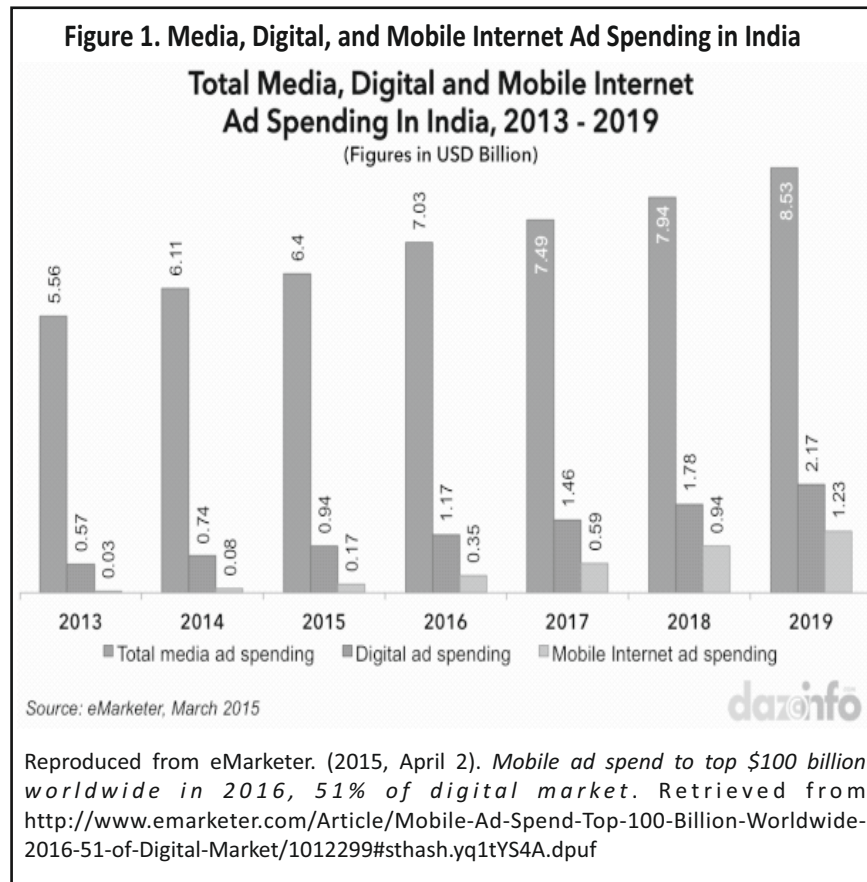
Literature Review

In the present scenario, advertisers use special tactics to attract the target population toward their brands and products. The concept of celebrity endorsements in advertisements appeared long back in the 1760s when Josiah Wedgwood, the founder of the Wedgwood brand of pottery and chinaware, used royal endorsements to popularize his brands to a new level (Almquist & Robert, 2000). Thereafter, in the last two decades of 1800, trade cards with pictures of celebrities and a product description were either directly handed over to consumers or were supplied with products. Later on, in 1905, comedians like Fatty Arbuckle and Harry Bulger endorsed Murad Cigarettes. Other endorsers for promoting cigarette brands were Henry Fonda, Jack Benny, Ethel Barrymore, and Fred Astaire. Wheaties, the oldest brand of breakfast cereal in America, engaged 46 out of 51 players selected for the 1939 Major League All-Star Baseball Game, as endorsers. The celebrities till the 1930s were athletes, but by 1950s, TV, entertainment, and media stars like Charlie Chaplin were one of the first choice of the companies as endorsers. According to Clark and Horstmann (2009), the predominant brands involving cigarettes, beauty products, beverages, and audio equipment were endorsed by celebrities from 1920-1970.

As far as the Indian culture is concerned, Indians worship TV actors, film stars, and cricketers particularly, and treat them as gods. The best example to support the above fact is that actor Rajnikanth has temples dedicated to his glory. Very early, in 1950s, Hindustan Lever Limited engaged Bollywood stars as endorsers for publicizing the beauty soap, Lux. Later on, in early and late 1990s, Bollywood star Tabassum endorsed Prestige pressure cookers, Jalal Agha endorsed Pan Parag, and famous cricketers Kapil Dev and Sunil Gavaskar endorsed Palmolive Shaving Cream and Dinesh Suitings, respectively.

According to Gupta and Dang (2009), the 1.25 billion population of India is diverse in terms of beliefs, ethnicity, status, culture, language, dialects, norms, and values. The whole of the population is classified economically into lower, upper, and middle classes. This classification defines the buying behaviour of the people. The main target of the brands is often the middle class, as majority of the population falls under this category (Mukherjee, 2012). Brajesh and Gouranga (2011) defined 'intimacy at a distance,' which forms an unseen relation between the celebrities and the consumers. This relationship has a very strong potential of enhancing a brand's market value and improving brand equity highlights. Celebrity endorsements also influence consumers' attitude and behaviour, which is the most critical strategy in marketing communications (Patel, 2009). Since advertisements are the critical tools for motivating customer behaviour to make purchases, companies invest a huge amount of money on celebrity endorsements (Khatri, 2006). The major drawback of celebrity endorsements is the high cost of the product, which is ultimately borne by the consumers.

The Figure 1 shows an increase in total media ad spending of 10% from 2013-2014, which was expected to rise by 4.5% in 2016. However, it is expected to increase marginally from \$ 6.4 billion to \$ 8.53 billion from 2015-2019. It can also be seen that media ad spending contributes majorly towards total ad spending in India. Digital ad



spending is expected to increase to \$ 2.17 billion till 2019. The contribution of mobile internet ad spending is very low as compared to the other two categories (eMarketer, 2015 ; Shakthi, 2015).

Objectives of the Study

At this stage, it becomes important to explore the various aspects of celebrity endorsements with respect to the Indian perspective. In this paper, the role of celebrity endorsements in affecting brand value, consumers' behaviour towards purchasing, match and mismatch between the celebrity and the brand, and the various advantages and disadvantages of the concept of celebrity endorsement are discussed.

Factors Affecting Celebrity Endorsements

The impact of celebrity endorsements is affected by a number of factors including the image and popularity of the celebrity, a proper match between the product and the celebrity, the attractiveness of the advertisement, the frequency of the advertisement in electronic and print media, and so forth.

(1) Image and Popularity of the Celebrity : It is an affirmed fact that celebrity endorsers are much more influential than non-celebrity endorsers in influencing the buying attitudes of consumers (Kamins, Brand, Hoeke, & Moe, 1989). The symbiosis between the image of the celebrity and the associated brand can improve the brand image (Erdogan, 1999). Bollywood stars are the first preference as endorsers followed by cricketers, TV actors,

Table 1. Indian Celebrities and their Endorsement Values

S.N.	Celebrity Name	Endorsement Value (INR)	Major Brands
1	Aamir Khan	5-7 crores per day	Samsung Mobiles, Tata Sky, Coca-Cola, Titan Watches, Snapdeal etc.
2	Shah Rukh Khan	3.5-4 crores per day	Tag Heuer, Airtel, Videocon, Emami, Hyundai, Big Bazar, Pepsodent, Dish TV etc.
3	Salman Khan	3.5-5 crores per day	Thums Up, Revital, Wheel, Suzuki Motorcycles, Yatra.com, Dixcy Scott, Splash, Relaxo etc.
4	Amitabh Bachchan	2.5 crores per day	Parker Pens, Dabur, Dairy Milk, Boroplus, ICICI, Kalyan Jewellers, Gujarat Tourism, Navratna Oil, Maggi etc.
5	Akshay Kumar	8-10 crores per year	Relaxo, Dollar Club, Micromax Mobile, Eveready, Manappuram Gold Loan, Honda India, Sugar-Free, Rasna etc.
6	Ranbir Kapoor	3 crores per day	Pepsi, John Players, Panasonic, Nissan, Lenovo, Docomo, Hero Motor Corp, Franco Leone, Saavan etc.
7	Deepika Padukone	7.5 crores for every endorsement	Coca Cola, Axis Bank, Kellogg's, Garnier, Vogue, Tissot, Van Heusen, Lifestyle Melange, Parachute, HP, Nescafe, Lux etc.
8	Kareena Kapoor Khan	3-4 crores for every endorsement	Sony, Head & Shoulders, Boroplus, Lux, Vivel Soap, Colgate, Lakme, Philips Hair Styler, Berger Paints, Limca, TETLEY's Green Tea etc.
9	Katrina Kaif	5- 6 crores per day	Lux, Berger Paints, Slice, Panasonic, Veet, Sony Xperia, Titan Raga, Choc On, L'Oreal, LG, Olay, Nakshatra Diamond Jewellery, Pantene etc.
10	Aishwarya Rai Bachchan	5-6 crores per endorsement	Titan Watches, Longines, L'Oreal, Coca-Cola, Palmolive, Phillips, Nakshatra Diamond Jewellery, Kalyan Jewellers, Prestige, Dee Beers Diamonds, Lodha Group etc.
11	M S Dhoni	10 crores per endorsement per year	Pepsi, Reebok, Orient Fans, Lays , Aircel, Dabur, Boost, TVS, Titan, Gulf oil, Ashok Leyland, Exide, Amarpali, Siyarams, Rhiti Sports Management Private Limited, and Mindscapes etc.
12	Virat Kohli	3.5-5 crores per endorsement per year	PepsiCo, Boost, Munch (from Nestle), Clear hair care (Unilever), Royal Challenge (from United Spirits), Adidas, MRF, Mattel, Oakley, TVS Motors, Fastrack (from Titan), Fair & Lovely
13	Varun Dhawan	50 lakh per endorsement	Coca-Cola, Idee, Gatsby, Panasonic, We Chat and Nestle, Big Bazar, Skybags, Mazza, Men's Deo range addiction
14	Ranvir Singh	1.5 crores per day	Raymond, Pepsi, Alpenlibe, Amul, Kingfisher, Tata Sky, Kurkure, Fevicol, Tata Manza, Radio Mirchi, Airtel, Eveready Battery, Thums Up, Durex

and other sports persons. There is a direct relationship between the image and popularity of the celebrity and the endorser's value. A most effective endorser is the one who is extremely popular and whose image is influential. The cricket legend and master blaster, Sachin Tendulkar still rules as an endorser due to his outstanding popularity even after his retirement from international cricket in November 2013. Almost all the companies continue their association and faith in the "Master Blaster". Companies like Adidas, Luminous, Toshiba, Aviva Life Insurance Co. Ltd., MRF Ltd., DM Healthcare Pvt. Ltd., the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Cricket Council, Coca-Cola, SAR Group, and Future Group issued statements about the association with Sachin even in his post-retirement phase. According to *Forbes* magazine, Sachin Tendulkar earned \$22 million in June 2013 with endorsements from brands like BMW, soft drinks, health drinks like Boost, and so forth, and jumped from 78th position to 51st position in the *Forbes* ranking list in January 2014 after his retirement. Companies consider that there is no change in the image of the cricket star even after his retirement as he has mass appeal and thousands of followers nationally as well as internationally. Another example, which can be quoted, is that of popular Bollywood star Amitabh Bachchan who was recently endorsed by Doordarshan's Kisan Channel for ₹ 6.31 crores, which is the most expensive endorsement ever of the Bollywood cine star, according to a report published in Business Standard ("Top celebrity endorsers and their current fees," 2015).

In the Table 1, popular Indian celebrities are listed along with their endorsement values and the brands for which they are endorsed. As can be seen from the Table 1, many celebrities are involved in multiple endorsements simultaneously. According to Rice, Kelting, and Lutz (2012), simultaneous multiple endorsements by a celebrity make celebrity likeability less favorable. When engaged in multiple endorsements, particularly if endorsed for the same type of brands, the consumers are confused for their buying preferences and this also results in decreased credibility of the celebrity. In 2009, FMCG giant Colgate-Palmolive - a major contributor in the oral care category products like toothpaste, toothbrush, tooth powder, etc. endorsed Shah Rukh Khan as its new brand ambassador. In 2010, the same celebrity was assigned the job of brand ambassador by Hindustan Unilever for Pepsodent toothpaste. To quote another example, the star is also involved in the endorsement of cold drinks Pepsi as well as Sprite- a product of Coca-Cola Company (Mukherjee, 2012).

Still, another effective way of promoting brand value is the endorsement of regional celebrities. India is a country with diversity in culture, religions, habits, attitudes, behaviour, and mainly, the languages. As a result, regional celebrities are the key endorsers endorsed by a brand in a particular geographical area. Due to individualism and collectivism dimensions of the culture along with strong regional identification, the acceptance of celebrities as endorsers in the areas from where they actually belong is much high. Recently, Kamal Haasan, a famous star of Bollywood, legend in South Indian cinema, and United Nations ambassador on HIV/AIDS, endorsed for the first time in his career, the popular textile showroom brand Pothys - a chain of textile showrooms in South India in order to help people living with HIV/AIDS. Similarly, the popularity and image of leading actor Dharmendra in early 1980s boosted the sale of Rajdoot motorcycle, as he was the endorser of the brand which hailed from Punjab. Companies these days thus play double cards using regional celebrities as well as national level celebrities for promoting their brands.

(2) Ideal Match Between the Product and the Celebrity - Product Match-Up : Celebrity-product match-up refers to the credibility in terms of the compatibility between the brand and the celebrity endorsing the brand. According to McCracken (1989), there should be a symbolic “match” between the celebrity’s image and the brand image for a better and effective endorsement. The product characteristics are enhanced if there is a perceived and close association between brand attributes and celebrity image (Okorie, 2010). In 2015, Reebok - a fitness brand endorsed India's favorite cricket captain M. S. Dhoni to convey the message of fitness as the image and personality were very well matched up with the brand's motives such as fit for fitness, healthy for health conscious, perfect body-sports shoes, sport person-rugged and sturdy, etc. There are a number of mismatched endorsements, but the most popular one is the branding of beauty soap Lux by the most unexpected endorser - Shah Rukh Khan.

Thus, the selection of the celebrity as an endorser is a very important and choosy task. No doubt, the popularity of the celebrity is the main requisite, however, companies should follow the celebrity-product match-up so as to transfer complete information regarding the brand qualities to the consumers in a creative, effective, and positive way.

(3) Attractiveness of the Advertisement : An influencing and effective advertisement can easily disseminate the highlights of marketing plans so as to achieve extraordinary results by targeting a particular audience. Thus, the advertisement contents are very important in this regard. An effective advertisement is the one which is memorable. *Recall* is about what happened during the course of the ad and what information is provided about the product; *entertaining*- capturing the attention and forcing the audience to view it again and again; *humorous* - also helps to capture the attention of the viewers; suggestive about the characteristics of the product through effective slogans and should be true and close to facts (Singh & Sapre, 2015).

In 2003, Coca-Cola India started the ad campaign with the tagline '*Thanda Matlab Coca-Cola*' featuring Aamir Khan as an endorser to target rural and semi-urban consumers to connect with the brand Coca-Cola, making it synonymous with *thanda*, that is, the generic word for soft drinks. This was a remarkable campaign as the company

claimed that this campaign increased the rural consumption from 9% in 2001 to 25% in 2003. Later on, in April 2003, former Miss World and Bollywood actress Aishwarya Rai along with Vivek Oberoi were endorsed by Coca-Cola India to target the Indian youth through their new ad campaign with the tagline '*Piyo Thanda, Jiyo Thanda*'.

(4) Reach and Frequency of the Advertisements : Reach is defined as the number of viewers who are exposed to an advertisement at least once ; whereas, frequency is the number of times they are exposed to a particular advertisement. In order to increase the reach and frequency of the advertisement, they are repeatedly aired particularly during prime time and during the very popular shows. Cricket matches, super hit movies, and epics are the main choices for the brands. Celebrity endorsements is also an effective tool to increase the reach and frequency. The thrill and enjoyment to see popular and favorite stars is captured by the brands to promote the brand value.

(5) Positive Impact of Celebrity Endorsements : Celebrity endorsements for product endorsements may be regarded as a form of co-branding. This can influence the brand image through meaning transfer from the celebrity endorser to the endorsed brands. Involvement of a celebrity for brand promotion shows a positive impact on brand image, which has a direct and positive impact on the brand equity (Mukherjee, 2012). Brand awareness is another important issue in marketing the brand. Huang and Radder (2008) described brand awareness as the first and critical stage in the process of moving and attracting consumers to buy a product and finally to develop a brand preference. Slisbury (2009) concluded that the advertisements with featured celebrities not only attract more attention of the consumers, but also generate eagerness to buy the brand being endorsed.

Another factor is the easy recall of the product through celebrity from a variety of similar products available in the market. It is the general view that the products endorsed by a celebrity are of better quality as compared to non-celebrity endorsements. For the introduction of a new product in the market, endorsement through a celebrity fosters a sense of trust for the brand among the consumers. Celebrity endorsement is also a potential tool in repositioning the brand in the market.

(6) Negative Impact of Celebrity Endorsements : A sudden change in the image of the celebrity remarkably affects the popularity, trust, and credibility which, in turn, can adversely affect the brand value of the product endorsed by the celebrity. It has been reported that the negative image of the celebrity endorser influences the consumers' perception about the celebrity as well as the endorsed product (Klebb & Unger, 1982; Till & Shimp, 1995). There can be a reverse effect of the negative image of the celebrity endorser. The marketers, however, can utilize the negative image of the celebrity as negativity still popularizes the celebrity to attract the attention of the viewers. Companies could use this attention and spin it in such a way that it reflects positively on their brand/product or on the celebrity endorser.

It is not only the image of the celebrity which affects the market value of the brand, the reverse can also happen, that is, any problem with the quality of the product may also harm the image of the celebrity. The latest example is of Maggi noodles, a brand of Nestle India in which higher level of lead metal along with MSG was reported. In June 2015, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) ordered Nestle India to withdraw all Maggi noodles from the market. The issue was so vulnerable that FIRs were registered against Amitabh Bachchan, Madhuri Dixit, and Preity Zinta, the endorsers of the brand.

A well-known disadvantage of celebrity endorsement is the vampire effect, in which the image of the celebrity overshadows the brand and in which viewers only remember the celebrity, but not the product. The cost of employing the celebrity as an endorser is yet another important factor in celebrity endorsements. More the popularity and image of the celebrity, the higher is the endorsement value. This amounts to millions of rupees for a stipulated time span. The ultimate payers for this remuneration are the consumers, as the brands generally increase

the product price to meet these expenditures. Small scale business companies cannot afford the high costs of endorsing popular celebrities. Such industries, however, can opt for non-celebrity endorsements as well as video game characters, famous cartoon characters, and even some fictitious characters as their endorsers (Divakar & Raju, 2016). One of the advantage of using video game characters, famous cartoon characters, and even some fictitious characters is that they are cost effective, economical, and do not suffer from the problem of image damage. There are a number of brands in the market which feature non-celebrity endorsers and are still earning a profit with the trust of the consumers.

Managerial Implications

With reference to recent developments regarding the endorsement of celebrities for product advertisements, it is now difficult for both the celebrities as well as the brands to make unrealistic, ambiguous, objectionable, and illusory claims. A Parliamentary Committee, headed by J.C. Divakar Reddy, has recommended changes in the Consumer Protection Bill. In its recommendations, the committee has proposed that if the claims made in the advertisement are found to be fake, a fine of ₹ 10 lakhs or 2 years of imprisonment or both for first-time offenders and ₹ 50 lakhs fine and 5 years of imprisonment for second-time offenders will be implemented. The Committee has further recommended that both the celebrities and the companies will be responsible for any untrue claims.

In addition, marketers need to make a proper selection of the celebrity in terms of his/her popularity, age, personality, credibility, and compatibility with the brand ; proper management of negative image of the celebrity is required ; proper planning and execution of the advertisements are required as these factors can drastically affect the brand equity and purchasing decisions of the consumers.

Conclusion

The main motive of the article was to review the concept of celebrity endorsements in an Indian perspective in the modern emerging corporate world. Celebrity endorsements is an effective tool for brand promotions, the introduction of new brands in the market, repositioning the brands, and to compete with the rival brands in spite of having some negative impact. Through this trend, celebrities as well as brands are mutually benefited. It is of utmost importance that a company should thoroughly perceive the market and study the personalities and images of the celebrities before employing them as endorsers. A strong match-up between the celebrity and the consumer is required. A celebrity's trustworthiness, celebrity expertise, and celebrity attractiveness are the most effective in capturing the attention of the audience.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

A number of studies have been reported in the literature regarding the role of celebrity endorsements in the Indian context, but an exhaustive study still needs to be conducted with special reference to the establishment of a proper relationship between a celebrity's impact on brand image and equity along with an examination of the consumer psychology. Additionally, no model has been developed in an Indian perspective to understand the exact role of celebrity endorsements. These areas can be looked into by researchers in future studies in this context.

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