

## Celebrities in Advertising How Judicious?

### (Sell-Lebrity Endorsement)

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**Abstentions :** The personal study is to accomplish the basics of advertising appeals. Judicious utilization of various appeals discussed and understanding importance of psychology of consumer in effective AD comparing.

**Using a celebrity is not a silver bullet.....what you need is a great idea.** -Harmish Pringle

Stars, who are known to shape destinies, cast an enormous influence. No, we're not talking about astrology here. We're referring to the powerful effect of celebrities on destinies of brands. One approving nod from a famous face can translate into millions in brand sales.

Perhaps that's why the world over, companies have been using stars to endorse everything, from food to food chains, from soft and hard drinks to health drinks, from clothes and accessories to cars (and the tyres on which they run).

**Origin of celebrity advertising**—The use of testimonials by advertisers dates back to their "unsavory association" with patent medicines in the 19th century. It was not until the 1920s, however that advertisers used famous people for product endorsements. Actress Joan Crawford, Clara Bow and Janet Gaynor were among the first celebrities to promote products. At that time, the rationale given by advertising agencies for using celebrities was "the spirit of emulation". The reason behind the popularity of celebrity advertising is marketers belief that the viewers attention level is much higher which will result in greater sales. Generally, celebrities are used for their unique attributes, accomplishments and expertise which make advertisements more believable to customers. Although the potential benefits of using celebrity advertising to promote brand images and products are significant, so are the costs and risks. The inherent upside of attaching a celebrity to a brand is that the brand literally has a face, name and personality that immediately projects an image of a living, breathing, credible person as opposed to a faceless corporate entity. The downside is that individuals are not as stable or as easily controllable as corporate entities.

**As fame comes and goes, it goes the brand**—But when the star is ascending, the idea is to capitalize on the glamour of celebrity by selling a piece of the dream. Legend has it that Tommy Hilfiger's clothing brand enjoyed a US\$ 100 million sales climb over a one year period after rapper Snoop Dogg appeared clothed in a Hilfiger logo rugby shirt on television program "Saturday Night Live".

**Celebrity advertising as a panacea to clients worries**—In the advertising world, celebrity advertising is seen as a substitute for 'absence of ideas'—and actually frowned upon. Yet it appears again and again.

**The reasons are quite insightful**—★ A client hits upon celebrity as a solution when his agency is unable to present to him a viable, exciting solution for his communication/marketing problem. He then feels that the presence of a well-known face is an easy way out. ★ A client looks at a celebrity solution, sometimes, to follow competition. When attacked with a celebrity, a quick response is to get another one to combat. The result is often, at best, achieving parity. ★ A third, and often unfortunate, reason for celebrities is a client's desire to rub shoulders with the glitterati. And signing a celebrity is a passport to that. Most frequently, celebrities are given as 'fate accompli' to the agency. And scripts are written around them. It is rare that there is an idea on the table and client and agency mutually agree that the presence of a celebrity will actually lift the script. This is very similar to Bollywood blockbuster films where the cast is decided upon and the script either written accordingly or re-engineered around the cast !

**There is no doubt that celebrity advertising has its benefits the four Os :**★ Quick saliency : It get cut through because of the star and his attention getting value. Goodlas Nerolac has ensured high saliency for its brand with the inclusion of Amitabh Bachchan in its advertising. ★ Quick connect : There needs to be no insight but the communication connects because the star connects. Sachin, Shah Rukh and their ilk's ensure an easy connect for Pepsi with the youth. ★ Quick shorthand for, brand values : The right star can actually telegraph a brand message fast without elaborate story telling. Kapil Dev and Sachin Tendulkar seem to have done that successfully for Boost in the early 90s. And helped to differentiate it in the malted beverages market. ★ Quick means of brand differentiation : In a category where no brand is using a celebrity, the first that picks one up could use it to differentiate itself in the market. Boost did it in the malted beverage category. And Preity Zinta does all the above four for Perk - connecting with the youth and reinforcing the brand's youthful, spontaneous, energetic values.

**There are however the classic fears of celebrity usage**—★ The celebrity vampires the product : Unless the celebrity's values, the category benefit and the brand values are closely linked there are chances that the celebrity is remembered more than the brand he is advertising for. And in a celebrity clutter, the chances that the brand and category can be remembered become even more difficult for the average consumer. Pepsi and Lux tend to use multiple celebrities in an attempt to overcome this. ★ The celebrity trap : Once into a celebrity, it is hard to get out of it. If the brand has done even moderately well after the break of a celebrity campaign, it becomes difficult to separate the role of message and the role of the celebrity in selling the brand. And hence, the celebrity becomes an addiction for the marketing team. And the task to find substitutes becomes more and more difficult. Interestingly, celebrity is a disease that is seen to spread across a marketing department. Once one brand manager gets into it, others tend to follow, not wanting to be left behind !

With the surfeit of celebrities on screen and in the newspapers, there are two new drawbacks emerging for celebrity usage. Celebrity credibility is coming under question. Consumers are getting more and more advertising savvy and are beginning to voice opinions, even in small towns, like "He has been paid to sell the product."

**Clearly celebrity endorsement is not longer as credible as it was a few decades ago**—Unless category and celebrity are closely linked (like Nike and sports stars), the power of a celebrity's word is questionable. The trustworthiness of public figures, which celebrities tended to bring in the past, is bound to disappear as a celebrity begins to appear and endorse a brand in every conceivable category! Celebrity clutter. With each celebrity endorsing multiple products and multi brands in a category, resorting to different celebrities, the consumer is left confused.

**And reluctant to get into 'this celebrity is bigger than that comparison' to make brand choices**—Santro is endorsed by Shah Rukh Khan and Palio by Sachin Tendulkar....does the consumer buy the brands because of the star pull?...a question worth pondering about. It ends up making brand parity rather than giving brand differentiation, often one of the key aims of using a celebrity. When Palmolive used Kapil Dev in the '80s, his line 'Palmolive da jawaab nahin' became famous—it is remembered even today. Pataudi gave Gwalior suiting a strong competitive edge and pushed it to Number 2 in perceptions in the suiting market. Even Sridevi made Cema bulbs and tubes memorable by dancing in a bulb! The advertisements by themselves were fairly non-descript; the celebrities gave the brand the differentiation. Celebrity advertising were few and far in between in those days. The days of 'pure' celebrity working for the brand seem to be over. Today, it is back to the power of an idea and an insight. No simple solutions exist any longer. Unless there is something powerful in the idea, the celebrity is just another cost. Aamir Khan and Coke is the ultimate example of the same. As long as the brand depended on his star value and wove interesting stories around him, it just didn't cut ice with the consumer—until 'Thanda Matlab Coca-Cola' happened. Could it have worked as well without a celebrity? One will never know as the brand has entered the celebrity trap.

**Probable Solution**—The burning questions which are clogging new era marketers and brand managers minds are : Which celebrity should one go with? Who should be the spokesperson for your product? Who caters to which niche? Does it always happen by trial and error? Should a corporate organization pay for individual research to find logical fits for their needs/brands? The US has a popular index, called the Q score, that summarises various perceptions and feelings that consumers have in the form of 'likeability' measurements. It measures familiarity and appeal of performers, characters, personalities, etc.

So, how about developing an index in India that would aid companies in reaching out to their respective audiences? The index could be classified on the basis of demographics, psychographics, and geographical demarcations. It would have to be relevant to advertisers and brand managers (who have used any of the known celebrities as endorsers; they could check out the measurable value addition), representatives from respective fraternities/domains, peers, media, etc. The index could be based on a rating that takes into account agreed parameters/attributes, past-present media coverage/favourability and relevance, ground situation in terms of successful/unsuccessful seasons/tenures, future prospects, etc. Additionally, the index could look at whether endorsement attributed to a particular celebrity has caused a clutter.

Once the rating system and index is in place, interested parties could subscribe to the report covering these aspects periodically. However, as for the 'Q score' process, there are certain criticisms. So, at the very outset, some of those concerns need to be addressed. For instance, if a survey is based on the views of a majority of people who are highly familiar with a celebrity, the results may be skewed, particularly if the results are calculated with simple ratios. So, if the celebrity is very well liked by only a small group of people who know him, their Q rating will be high. However, in advertising and communicating to a wide audience the celebrity in question may not be effective.

In such situations, one would have to develop a better-informed, measurable rating system. But, is the market large enough to justify the expenses?

**Recent developments**—Meantime, a whole new celebrity endorsement opportunity has cropped in the backdrop of 'Shining India'. The 'High & Mighty--Power List' of India Today threw up several faces like Infosys chief Narayana Murthy. He was yet again not admired business leader among the youth, according to the Annual Management Student Study conducted by Brand-Comm. Perhaps, Narayana Murthy could be a brand ambassador for the Indian Army which is trying to attract talented youth. May be, renowned heart specialist Dr. Naresh Trehan could put in a word with the influential NRI community to invest in infrastructure in India. Kalpana Chawla for endorsing science education in India. And, why not get TV journalists—the new world crusaders, some of whom enjoy tremendous rapport and credibility with their audience, to endorse brand and products. With the general elections looming large, how about getting young, suave, techno savvy politicians to double up as endorsers? Some of the top names in the domain are already successful professionals like journalists, lawyers.... every marketer's best defense!

In Conclusion :- Advertising plays a major role in promoting influencing and transmitting social values.

Undoubtedly, through understanding of consumer behavior can help the advertisers in developing an Ad campaign effectively. Thus having a good grip over what consumer could think and how he take decision is must to create good Ad campaign utilizing various tactics to tools available.

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