

Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement: A Review on Related Concepts and Empirical Applications

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Abstract

Celebrity endorsement is a highly effective strategy to gain consumer interests and brand loyalty in a cluttered marketplace. Celebrity endorsement increases awareness of a company's advertising, creates positive feelings towards brands and are perceived by consumers as more entertaining. Using a celebrity in advertising is, therefore, likely to positively affect consumers' brand attitudes and purchase intentions. It is noticed that services sector brands intensively depend on celebrity endorsement strategies in a noticeable trend. However, the notion of brand evaluation context is highlighted as empirical research gaps found in relation to the services sector in Sri Lanka. Alongside, this concept paper attempts to review the notion of effectiveness of celebrity endorsement, mechanism of celebrity worship motives and influence of effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in line with brand related contexts. Accordingly, this paper populates to examine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluations leading to brand-related behaviors in the service sectors namely telecommunication, insurance and financial sector.

Keywords: Brand Evaluation, Celebrity Worship Motives, Celebrity Endorsement, Service Sector, Sri Lanka

Background to Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity endorsement is a popular advertising method, which increases the continuous interest of both customers and companies. Today's companies are spending millions of investment each year for the endorsement of their products/services by celebrities. The company makes use of the celebrity's characteristics and qualities to establish an analogy with the products specialties with an aim to position them in the minds of the target consumers. Thus, celebrity endorsement, has become one of the most popular advertising strategies for promoting various types of products, services or brands (Biswas, Hussain & O'Donnell, 2009). Celebrity endorsement has a number of advantages. For instance, a celebrity can attract new users and even revive a product that has lost market share by creating new interest from consumers (Atkin & Block, 1983; Petty, Cacioppo & Schuman, 1983). A well-respected celebrity can also enhance brand equity (Till, 1998); build brand credibility in a short period of time and position a brand (Petty & Lindsey-Mullikin, 2006); affect consumers' attitude toward a brand (Till, 1998); enhance brand recognition (Petty et al, 2006); and create a distinct personality to the endorsed brand (McCracken, 1989).

Celebrities are people who enjoy public recognition by a large share of a certain group of people who possess attributes like attractiveness, extraordinary lifestyle and enjoy a high degree of public awareness. Roll (2006) described celebrities as people who are widely known to the public for their accomplishments in their respective fields, be it the movies, sport, music or politics. Celebrities acted as spokespersons, in order to promote and advertise

and products, services and ideas. Those celebrities came from the scene, modeling, sports and the movie industry (Kambitsis, Harahousou, Theodorakis, Chatzebiz &, 2002).

Petty, Cacioppo & Schumann (1983) claimed that unlike anonymous endorsers, celebrities add value to the image transfer process, sustaining brand communication and thereby achieving a higher level of attention and recall. Research has shown that the use of celebrities in advertising can have a positive influence on the credibility of and preferences for advertising, and ultimately on purchase intentions (Farhat & Khan, 2011). Anonymous models offer demographic information such as gender, age and status, but these meanings are blunt and imprecise. Celebrities offer a variety of lifestyle meanings and personalities that anonymous models cannot provide. Moreover, celebrities are more powerful media than nameless models. Unlike anonymous endorsers, celebrities add value to the image transfer process, sustaining brand communication and achieving a higher level of attention and recall (Song, Chaipoopiratana & Combs, 2008).

Celebrity endorsement is the type of advertisement, which uses an expert, famous person or celebrity to endorse the product or services. Celebrity endorsement has been defined as: "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good..." (Byrne & Breen, 2003). Research statistics has shown that the use of celebrity advertisement has doubled in the past 10 years, which is statistically related to the consumer goods industry. Today, movie stars, movie actors, famous athletes and even dead personalities are widely used to endorse products. (Shimp, 2003). Celebrities make

advertisements believable and enhance message recall. Further, Celebrities aid in the recognition of the brand names create positive attitude towards the brand and create a distinct personality for the endorsed brand (Jagdish & Wanger, 1995). They increase awareness of a company's

advertising, create positive feelings towards brands and are perceived by consumers as more entertaining (Solomon 2002). Using a celebrity in advertising is therefore likely to positively affect consumers' brand attitudes and purchase intentions.

Theoretical Approach to Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement

There are different models and theories found in early studies which discuss the characteristics of celebrities to be possessed in making an endorsement effective. Byrne et al. (2003) identified three key attributes that are fundamental to successful transference namely credibility, attractiveness, and power. Credibility is the extent to which the recipient sees the source as having knowledge, skill or experience and trusts the source to give unbiased, objective information or in other wordings, credibility refers to the extent to which the source is recognized as possessing significant knowledge or experience to offer an unbiased judgment (Carroll, 2008). Accordingly, two important dimensions of credibility are expertise and trustworthiness.

According to the somewhat contrast argument made by Seno & Lukas (2007), it stated that there are five factors affecting the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. Those factors can be divided into two categories as the source-based factor and management-based factor. Source-Based Factors related to the celebrity image which controlled by the celebrity. Credibility and Attractiveness were classified under this category. Management-Based Factors related to how marketing department manages celebrity and could be controlled through management. It referred that Celebrity-Product Congruency, Celebrity Multiplicity, and Celebrity Activations as management based factors.

According to the much-extended reference made by Shimp (2003) introducing "TEARS" model said that credibility and attractiveness as two components that motivates the endorser's effectiveness. This TEARS model represents five attributes namely trustworthiness and expertise belongs to the credibility component, while physical attractiveness, respect, and similarity are dimensions of attractiveness

Erdogan (1999) defined trustworthiness as a consumer's perception of the honesty, integrity and believability of an endorser. Further, Shimp (2003) argues that a celebrity endorser is trusted by the target audience due to the life he or she lives professionally and personally, as revealed to the general public through the mass media. As O'Mahony & Meenaghan (1997) showed, source trustworthiness is a

basic attribute underlying source credibility that fundamentally affects attitudinal change in consumers. Without trustworthiness, the other attributes possessed by the endorser are unlikely to be effective in changing consumers' attitudes. Priester & Petty (2003) noted that if a celebrity endorser is perceived to be highly trustworthy, a consumer might not scrutinize the advertising message as much and may unthinkingly accept the conclusion as valid.

Expertise in endorser credibility refers to knowledge, experience, and skills with regard to the advertised brand (Erdogan, 1999). The source or celebrity that is a specialist has been found to more persuasive (Aaker, 1997) and generates more purchase intentions (Ohanian, 1991). Furthermore, Speck, Schumann & Thompson (1988) stated that celebrities, who are seen as an expert in a specific area, engender a higher brand recognition than celebrities who are seen as non-experts. The level of celebrity expertise will determine its effectiveness (Amos, Holmes & Strutton, 2008). The more expertise a celebrity has, the more effective it will be.

The third general attribute that contributes to endorser effectiveness is attractiveness (Shimp, 2003). When consumers find something in an endorser that they consider attractive, persuasion occurs through identification. Identification occurs when "individuals conform to the attitude or behavior advocated by another person because these individuals derive satisfaction from the belief that they are like that person" (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). The TEARS model identifies three sub-components of the general concept of attractiveness: physical attractiveness respect, and similarity (Shimp, 2010). Physical attractiveness includes any number of virtuous characteristics that consumers may perceive in an endorser: intellectual skills, personality properties, lifestyle characteristics, athletic prowess, and so on (Shimp, 2003). Research has supported the intuitive expectation that physically attractive endorsers generally produce more favorable evaluations of advertisements and the brands than do less attractive communicators (Kahle & Homer, 1985). As it refers in the TEARS model (Shimp, 2003; 2010), Respect represent the quality of being admired due to one's personal qualities and accomplishments. Celebrities are respected for their acting ability, athletic prowess, appealing personalities, their stand on important societal issues, and other qualities. Celebrities who are respected

are also generally liked, and likeability arises from a fondness for the endorsers because of their behavior, physical appearance or other traits (Bryne et al, 2003). When respected/liked celebrities enter into endorsement relationships with various brands, the respect/liking of the celebrities may extend to the brands they are linked to, thus enhancing the brand's equity via positive effects on consumers' attitudes toward the brand (Shimp, 2003). Similarity represents the degree to which an endorser matches an audience in terms of characteristics pertinent to the endorsement relationship – age, gender, ethnicity, etc. (Shimp, 2003). In addition, Shimp (2003; 2010) claimed that similarity between the endorser and audience is especially important when there is a wide range of products or services on offer and where audience members are heterogeneous. In such cases, a spokesperson perceived to be similar to the audience is likely to have the greatest effect in influencing attitudes and choices. Meanwhile, recently held studies have rationalized TEARS model (Shimp, 2010) as an extended explanation to determine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in examining

branding-related studies. Thus, it could postulate to consider the components of the said model to investigate how the effectiveness of endorsed-message is patterned.

Meanwhile, multiplicity or over-endorsement has been referred in empirical studies claiming its influence on overall effectiveness of endorsed-message (Zahaf & Anderson, 2008), and later emphasized the same with reference to services sector context (Dissanayake, 2015; Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015). The notion of over endorsement is a significant practice in many countries as popular celebrities engage with different brands. Then it leads a proposition to determine how far it makes a logical impact to endorsed brand evaluation. This may patter the influence of endorsed message that derive through source-based factors, which are directly connected to celebrity character (Seno & Lukas, 2007). Thus, it is critically important to investigate how over-endorsement practice combined with source-based factors to determine the effectiveness of endorsed message leading to brand evaluation.

Mechanism of Celebrity Worship Motives in Celebrity Endorsement

The mechanism of psychological bond between the celebrity and consumer plays a critical role in determining the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. The mechanism how celebrity and consumer connect as a socio-psychological content has been explained in Absorption-Addiction Model (McCutcheon, Lynn, Lange & Houran et. al. 2002). According to the model, consumers tend to have a bonded bridge with the celebrity depending on what extend consumers holistically connect with the endorser. This connection is referred as worship motives which includes entertainment-based motivation, intense attachment, and pathological commitment as the main determinants of its (McCutcheon, et. al. 2002). Entertainment – based motives are found as how learning about the celebrity, discussing about the celebrity character with different people, and finding a satisfaction by knowing the life-related stories of the respective celebrity character. (McCutcheon, et. al. 2002). The next level up is intense attachment, in which fans tend to have more intensive and compulsive feelings towards the idol and they usually display this type of behavior in the company of friends or other fans (McCutcheon et al., 2002). According to the core of intense attachment, consumers tend to be like him/her in sharing all positive and negative matters faced by the particular celebrity, which is mentioned as “para-social” context (McCutcheon et.al. 2002). The third

dimension and most extreme expression of celebrity worship, borderline-pathological, tend to feel that they have a special relationship with the celebrity and are willing to do anything for the idol (Kowalczyk & Royné, 2013). The borderline-pathological, reflects an individual's obsessive-addictive attitudes and behaviors, and generally a small number is involved (Hyman & Sierra, 2010; Maltby, Day, Mc Cutchen, Martin, Caynus & Houran ,2003, 2004). However, pathological motive is not referred as widely a viable content in worship motives as it indicates such extreme bond with the celebrity. Thus, usually entrainment and intense motives are noticed as variables that determine consumer behavioral response for the endorsed brands (Hung & Cheng 2011). Meanwhile, the effect of celebrity worship motives has been postulated as a mechanism that shapes the brand evaluation behavior as it articulates consumer mind to respond to the endorsed-message (Dissanayake, Ismail & Pahlevan Sharif, 2017). Alongside, it could argue that worship motives operate as a mechanism that bridge the way how consumers motivate to respond the message leading evaluating the brand-endorsed. Thus, empirical studies are encouraged to investigate how worship motives moderate the impact of the effectiveness of endorsed-message towards brand evaluation. This may be a critical matter when it refers to over-endorsement aspect since celebrity-consumer bond could be reshaped or modified depending on how consumers appreciate over appearance of their favorite celebrity. Accordingly, worship motives could viewed as

an extended consideration in both managerial practices and

empirical investigations.

Influence of effectiveness of celebrity endorsement

Effectiveness of celebrity endorsement is a notion being examined by different empirical studies in line with brand related contexts. The content of endorsed message has been researched with brand evaluation and brand-related perspectives. Research has shown that celebrity endorsement can help create a positive effect on the consumer's brand awareness, brand trust (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1995), brand preference (Kamins, Brand, Hoeks, & Moe, 1989), and purchase intentions (Ohanian, 1991). These endorser effects are attributed to the celebrities' influence and their ability to transfer their values onto the brands they endorse.

Mukherjee (2009) analyzed the impact of celebrity endorsements on brands. This study revealed that consumers report higher self-brand connections for brands with images that are consistent with the image of a celebrity that they aspire to be like, particularly in the case when the image of the celebrity and the brand match. Study also examines how self-brand connections are formed. Celebrity endorsement effects are moderated by brand symbolism, such that brands that communicate something about the user yield stronger effects than brands that do not. In the case of aspirational celebrities, the positive effect of image congruency is stronger for those brands that are perceived to communicate something symbolic about the brand's user compared to those brands that do not.

Schlecht (2003) examined the relationship between celebrity endorsements and brands, by applying a selection of widely accepted principles of how consumers' brand

attitudes and preferences can be positively influenced. Thereby the concepts of source credibility and attractiveness, the match-up hypothesis, the meaning transfer model and the principles of multiple product and celebrity endorsement. A brief assessment of the current market situation indicates that celebrity endorsement advertising strategies can under the right circumstances indeed justify the high costs associated with this form of advertising. Several failures show, it is essential for advertisers to be aware of the complex processes underlying celebrity endorsement.

Ranjbarian and Shekarchizade (2010) Celebrity Endorser Influence on Attitude toward Advertisements and Brands- according to their study, there is a positive and significant relationship between attitude toward celebrity endorser and attitude toward advertisement and brands. Attitude toward celebrity endorser has directly or indirectly influence on attitude towards brand, and attitude towards advertisement is a mediator between attitude towards celebrity and attitude towards brands.

Money, Shimp, and Sakano (2006) studied the impact of negative information of celebrity on brand. They conducted comparative study in the US and Japan to investigate whether the form of negative information about a celebrity (other- or self-oriented) results in differential evaluations of the brand endorsed by the celebrity. Surprisingly, the authors find that both Japanese and Americans view endorsed products more positively in the presence of self-oriented negative information, a possible suspension of the famous fundamental attribution error in human judgment.

Conclusion

This paper review the empirical evidences and theoretical contributions pertain to effectiveness of celebrity endorsement, mechanism of celebrity worship motive and influence of celebrity endorsement in line with brand related contexts. Meanwhile, the notion of brand evaluation contexts is highlighted as empirical research gaps found in relation to different product contexts other than the physical goods including services (Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015; Hung, et.al. 2011; Spry, Pappu & Cornwell, 2011). According to the review, effectiveness of

celebrity endorsement is noted as a research scope connecting with brand evaluation and brand-related behaviors. Conclusively, empirical investigation could extend their research directions to brand evaluation contents and brand-related behaviors in line with the empirical gaps postulated in different product and market contexts (Spry, et.al. 2011). Thus, future studies are admired to cross check the empirical findings related to celebrity endorsement in different product contexts including services as a special niche whilst validating them with different consumer or market contexts

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