

CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT STRATEGY

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Abstract

Brands often use celebrities to get impact, because they are seen by the public as credible source of information about product or company. People aspire to the values and lifestyles of celebrities. Consumers selectively integrate perceived values and behavior of celebrities they admire, to build and communicate their own identity.

Celebrity endorser is a person who enjoys high reputation and prestige, being known to most people. Celebrity endorsement is a relevant strategy for the product categories which improve the image (such as fashion, perfumes or cosmetics).

This paper presents types, techniques and models of analysing celebrities' efficiency in endorsing brands/products. Celebrity endorsement has become one of the communication strategies used in marketing to build congruence between brand image and consumers. Famous persons exert their influence on consumer through perceived attributes such as expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, familiarity and likeability.

Key words: Endorser, celebrity endorsement, brand, advertising

JEL classification: M31, M37

1. Introduction

Endorsement strategy has been officially used by the company in the nineteenth century and developed as a means of promotion due to radio (30's) and TV (50's) commercials making, then grew rapidly in the 70's when celebrity endorsers appeared in 15% of all advertising. The share of appearances increased in the coming years: 20% in the 80's, 25% in the 90's, the XXI century setting celebrity endorsement as the most important and widely used marketing strategy [1].

Celebrity endorser is a person who advertises a product, a person well known for his/her achievements in areas which are different from the advertised product category [2]. Endorsements can have celebrities giving expert opinions, being a spokesperson for a product or associated with a brand [3]-[4]. There are more types of endorsements: *explicit* (person endorses the product), *implicit* (person uses the product), *imperative* (person impels the product), or *co presentational* (merely appearing with the product).

Unlike anonymous endorsers, celebrities add value to the image transfer process, sustaining brand communication and achieved a higher level of attention and recall [5]. Research has shown that the use of celebrities in advertising, compared with anonymous models, can have a positive influence on the credibility, preference for advertising and, ultimately, the purchase intention [6].

2. Endorsement techniques

There are a number of ways [7] in which celebrities can support a brand:

- Print ads in magazines;
- TV commercials (Nicole Kidman for Chanel No. 5 in 2004/2005);
- products used in films and television programs (Armani in "American Gigolo" in 1980 or Jimmy Choo in "Legally Blonde II");
- photos of celebrities paid to use certain brand products (to indicate that the product and the brand are part of their everyday life);
- celebrities photos with outstanding products that they wear (when they really appreciate the product and use it daily);
- brand name mention in music (Beyoncé about Jimmy Choo shoes);
- inviting celebrities to be co-creators in product design (Samantha Thavasa for Nicky Hilton handbags, Andreea Raicu (youth line) and Andreea Marin (babies line) for Irina Schrotter);
- Naming the products after the name of celebrities (Jackie purse from Gucci, Kellybags for Hermes).

Several celebrities had signed contracts for luxury brands image: Angelina Jolie (St John), Scarlett Johansson (Louis Vuitton), Lindsay Lohan (Miu Miu), Madonna (Versace, în 1995 și 2005), and Charlize Theron (Dior).

3. Models of celebrity endorsement analysis

To find out which celebrity is suitable for and effective in promoting a company or brand image, there are usually carry out studies of celebrity endorsement, which examines the association between product and celebrity. When a company selects a celebrity as endorser, it should consider celebrity *attractiveness* (in terms of physical appearance, intellectual abilities, skills and lifestyle), celebrity *credibility* (perceived expertise and confidence) and apparent *congruency between celebrity and brand*.

The most used methods of selection a celebrity endorser are described below:

Source credibility

The credibility source model developed by Carl Hovland and Walter Weiss in the 1950s and is used to imply a communicator's positive characteristics to affect the receiver's acceptance of a message.

The credibility of endorser is measured by the scale developed by Roobina Ohanian (1990), which consists of three constructs: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. The scale is using seven point semantic differentials.

Attractiveness refers la physical attractiveness, elegance, sexappeal.

Expertise is defined as the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions [8]. This includes competence, experience and qualifications.

Trustworthiness is defined as the degree of confidence in the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid [9]. It includes acceptance and trust in the communicator and the message.

The more a celebrity is advertising more products, the less has credibility in the eyes of consumers. The same rule explains why communicators are more credible when presenting a balanced message, with both favorable and unfavorable opinions than when they issue a unilaterally message favorable only to the advertised product.

Source attractiveness

McGuire's Source attractiveness model (1985) refers to the endorser's ability to win the audience by *similarity, familiarity, likeability* and *attractiveness* [10].

Advertising techniques are based on the assumption that beauty is itself persuasive. Physical attractiveness change attitude by directing attention to marketing stimuli.

Sometimes the appearance of a spokesman matters more than quality of his arguments and how they are supported. In advertising, where image is important for the product (such as beauty products), beauty itself has a persuasive force, celebrities serving only as a source of information.

"TEARS"

Shimp (2003) suggests that celebrities effectiveness must be assessed against five attributes, referred to as TEARS model [11]:

- *Trustworthiness*: honesty, integrity, believability. It reflects the extent to which audience members trust and believe what celebrities say regarding the advertised brand.
- *Expertise*: knowledge, experience, skills of regarding the advertised brand. An endorser is considered to be an expert when he endorses products related to area which made him well-known.
- *Attractiveness*: physical look, personality, lifestyle etc.
- *Respect*: refers to the quality of being admired or esteemed due to endorser's overall accomplishments.
- *Similarity*: represents the extent to which an endorser matches the characteristics of target audience (sex, age, lifestyle etc).

The Elaboration Likelihood Model

Celebrities are generally attractive, which helps to persuasion when consumers are concerned about the opinions and social acceptance or when the product is related to the increasing attractiveness. They can be seen as credible sources if they have expertise in a particular field, such as sport (when endorsing a sports item) or modeling (when endorsing make-up products).

Celebrities are often regarded as peripheral cues: they are important in convincing the audience only when consumers are not involved in processing the product or the advertisement. However, celebrities may provide information when a central aspect of celebrity matches the product (such as attractiveness and cosmetics). The endorser with physical appearance has characteristics such as power of attraction, likeable, charming and elegant.

Meaning Transfer Model

McCracken's model suggests the way the meaning associated with the famous person moves from the endorser to the product or brand through three stages. Thus, *meanings attributed to the celebrity become associated with the brand in the consumer's mind*. Celebrity image transfers to product, then to brand. One may transfer

personality and status (such as "successful" or "rich") or attributes such as "glamor", "beauty", "talent", "style". Finally, in the consumption process, the brand's meaning is acquired by the customer.

The fact that people "consume" first the image then the products associated with celebrities [12] explicitly shows the importance of the consumer's role in the process of endorsing brands with famous persons.

The results of a research from 2010 came in support of image transfer. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging technology, the researchers from University of Netherlands exposed 23 women to images of female celebrities wearing a specific brand of shoe. Researchers tried to find out how celebrities succeed in convincing people to buy products they endorse. The projected images were of either a female celebrity or a non-famous female face (which were previously matched for attractiveness).

As the participants looked at a series of slides, the researchers observed specific activity in the orbitofrontal cortex, an area which stores also happy memories, confirming the hypothesis of positive emotions induced by the celebrities. Then emotions get transferred from the personality to the product, producing a more positive impression of the item in question and a greater probability of purchasing it. But this brain activity was not activated when the subjects viewed the famous faces alone, suggesting that the brain not simply process the presence of a famous face during the celebrity-object pairings, but instead encoded the presentation of an object in the context of fame [13].

The matchup hypothesis

Kahle and Homer (1985) were among the first who empirically examined and proposed a hypothesis of congruence in the context of celebrity endorsement. They argued the idea that advertising effectiveness is increased if the celebrity image converges with endorsed product image. Beauty products endorsers, which are attractive in the same time, proved to have a positive influence on consumers in terms of *brand attitude, purchase intention, brand name and advertising message recall* [14].

Till and Busler (2000) analyzed the attractiveness versus expertise, concluding that there is a general attraction of brand attitude and purchase intention, but no effect on attraction based matching was not found, suggesting that attraction but expertise product correlates with celebrity [15].

Erdogan and Baker (2001) suggested that research could be extended beyond the attractiveness and credibility, taking into consideration the matching overall celebrity image with the brand and target audience [16].

According to Katyal (2007), there are certain parameters [17] that postulate compatibility between brand image and celebrity, as follows:

- Celebrity popularity.
- Celebrity physical attractiveness.
- Celebrity credibility.
- Celebrity prior endorsements.
- Whether celebrity is a brand user.
- Celebrity profession
- Celebrity's fit with the brand image.
- Celebrity-target audience match
- Celebrity associated values.
- Costs of acquiring the celebrity.
- Celebrity-product match.
- Celebrity controversy risk.

4. Risk of using celebrity endorsers

In some cases, celebrities can create, possible damage to the image and credibility:

1. When the celebrity image is not congruent with the brand image. Seagrams liquor brand erased the contract with Bruce Willis because of the mismatch;
2. When a person has appeared in ads for several brands, such as Malgosia Bela top.model that appeared in the Spring / Summer 2011 campaign of two brands simultaneously: Stella McCartney and Chloe;
3. When a person has obtained high scores for "awareness" but had a negative influence on purchase, like the cases of Donald Trump, Britney Spears, Paris Hilton and Anna Nicole Smith;
4. Situation in which stars do not actually use the products/services they advertise or even say they prefer competitors products. David Beckham shaved his head while endorsing Brylcreem, the solution for hair growth, Britney Spears drank Coke while signed contracts with Pepsi Cola, Jamie Oliver said that his restaurants were not supplied by Sainsbury's;
5. Scandals also jeopardize the company's reputation and brand image suffers from celebrity behavior. An example is Kate Moss, who at 31 years appears on the cover of the Daily Mirror consuming drugs, actions that have canceled contracts with major cosmetic companies; ads were withdrawn from the media and visibility dropped automatically.

Therefore, using celebrity endorsers in advertising present both advantages and disadvantages [18] (table no.1). There are five criteria to [19] carry out when using a celebrity in advertising:

- Statements must reflect the honest opinion, findings, beliefs, or experience of the celebrity;
- The accuracy of the celebrity’s claims must be substantiated by the advertiser;
- Any efficacy claims must be substantiated, if capable of substantiation and if such claims were made by the advertiser;
- If the advertisement claims the celebrity uses the product or service, the celebrity must in fact be a bona fide user;
- The advertiser can only use the endorsement as long as it has a good belief that the celebrity continues to hold the views expressed in the advertisement.

Table no. 1: Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Celebrity Endorsers

Advantages	Disadvantages
Increase attention, refresh a brand, add new dimensions to a brand.	Overshadow the brand; celebrity may even be considered to be the co-brand.
Image polishing; brand introduction; create awareness.	Public controversy; overexposure, dislike for celebrity.
Brand positioning and repositioning, brand refreshing, adding sex appeal.	Loss of public recognition; celebrity declines in importance.
Underpin global campaigns, lead to more favorable advertising rating, brand evaluations, and higher profits.	Image change; financial risk; long term contract with failing celebrity.

5. Conclusions

This review was performed to provide a deeper understanding of celebrity influence and consumer behavior. Celebrity endorsement is a strategy supported by three market factors: interaction between brands and consumers, consumer’s control over the messages they receive and media fragmentation [20].

Using celebrities in advertising dates back to the late nineteenth century getting more and more academic and practical attention. Research conducted to date [21] have reached topics as: the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement; celebrity endorsers and purchase intention (Kamins et al, 1989), added-value of the endorsement (Agrawal and Kamakura, 1995); positive or negative effects of celebrity endorsement (Till and Shimp, 1998), congruence between product/brand and endorser (Till and Busler, 2000, Seno and Lucas, 2007), consumer association with the endorser (Till and Busler, 2000; Daneshvary and Shwer, 2000), attractiveness, credibility and trust in celebrities (Dean and Biswas, 2001, Seno and Lucas, 2007).

Results has indicated that celebrities get *confidence* and *attention*, benefits that may increase sales of the products. The product promoted by celebrity is seen as being more purchased and therefore more valuable [22]. In addition, using celebrities in advertising increases awareness, create positive feelings towards the brand [23]. According to a neuroimaging study, a single exposure to a celebrity near a product can lead to long-term positive effect on memory and purchase intention of that product [24]. Endorsement contracts increased in value over decades, so it is important for managers to monitor the success and return of investments of these contracts.

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