

Celebrity Endorsement: Theoretical Insights and Key Attributes for Effective Marketing

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Abstract:

Celebrity endorsement has emerged as a prominent tactic in contemporary marketing, utilizing the influence of well-known figures to advocate for products and services. This research examines the attributes of celebrity endorsement and analyses significant theoretical insights that elucidate its efficacy. This research seeks to elucidate the theoretical foundations of celebrity endorsement strategies by analyzing the traits of effective celebrity endorsers like credibility, attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, similarity, familiarity and likability.

Additionally, it investigates the mechanisms of influence and key models, including the Source Model of Ohanian, TEARS Model, McCracken Source Model, Match-Up hypothesis and The Elaboration likelihood Model.

Keywords: Celebrity Endorsement, Credibility, Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Expertise, Similarity, Familiarity and Likability.

الملخص:

لقد ظهر الدعم الترويجي من خلال المشاهير كاستراتيجية بارزة في التسويق المعاصر، حيث يتم الاستفادة من تأثير الشخصيات المشهورة للترويج للمنتجات والخدمات. تتناول هذه الدراسة خصائص هذه الاستراتيجية التي تعتمد على المشاهير وتحلل الرؤى النظرية المهمة التي توضح فعاليتها. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى توضيح الأسس النظرية لاستراتيجيات الإعلانات التي تعتمد على المشاهير من خلال تحليل صفات المشاهير الفعالين مثل المصداقية، والجاذبية، والثقة، والخبرة، والتشابه، والألفة، والإعجاب. وآليات التأثير، والنماذج الأساسية بما في ذلك نموذج المصدر لأوهانيان، نموذج تيرز، نموذج مراكين للمصدر، فرضية التوافق، ونموذج احتمالية التفصيل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الدعم الترويجي من خلال المشاهير، المصداقية، والجاذبية، والثقة، والخبرة، والتشابه، والألفة.

1.Introduction

In today's world where the consumer is bombarded with advertising messages from all directions, various brands try to win the customer's attention by developing trust in them through novel ways. Celebrity endorsement is one of the most powerful tools for enhancing the visibility of a brand by making their advertisements seem real and relevant (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). The extensive use of celebrity endorsements in commercials, amounting to billions of dollars annually, indicates the need for additional research in this domain (Amos et al., 2008; Batra & Homer, 2004). This research aims to explore the key attributes that characterize celebrity endorsements and to highlight the contributions of well-known theories who have articulated these concepts. By examining the attributes of celebrity endorsement, this research seeks to uncover the various factors that influence consumer behavior.

Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity endorsement has traditionally been perceived as a prevalent strategy in modern marketing, characterized as a promotional approach wherein celebrities are merely associated with a product or brand (McCracken, 1989). A celebrity endorser is defined as "an individual recognized by the public for accomplishments outside the product category being promoted" (Friedman & Linda, 1979). Numerous organizations employ

celebrity endorsement as a marketing tactic to enhance brand visibility and reputation. Consumers establish connections with personalities linked to products, fostering a favorable disposition and enduring involvement with those brands (McCutcheon et al., 2002). Consumers, influenced by the allure and authenticity of the celebrity, exhibit heightened attention to these advertising, resulting in a positive disposition towards the company and an increase in buy intentions (Farrell et al., 2000; Hung, 2014).

The impact of celebrity endorsement: Benefits and Risks

Celebrity endorsement provides brands with significant advantages in visibility and market appeal, attracting attention to advertisements and increasing purchase intentions (Amos et al., 2008; Atkin and Block, 1983). Research shows that endorsements can enhance a company's financial performance, with Agrawal and Kamakura (1995) noting an average excess return of 0.44% in stock prices. However, this strategy also involves inherent risks. A major concern is the decline in a celebrity's popularity or potential scandals (Erdogan, 1999), which can negatively impact consumer perceptions and lead to decreased sales.

The "vampire effect" occurs when there is a mismatch between a celebrity's persona and the endorsed product, diverting attention away from the brand (Erdogan and Baker, 2000). Overexposure is another challenge; when a celebrity endorses multiple products, the

uniqueness of their association with any single brand can diminish (Mowen and Brown, 1981). Consumers may view these endorsements as financially motivated, undermining authenticity (Cooper, 1984; Tripp et al., 1994).

Given these mixed benefits and risks, careful selection of celebrity endorsers is crucial, prompting marketers to assess whether popularity alone is sufficient for positive consumer responses. The next section will explore key models for optimizing endorsement strategies.

2. Theoretical Models of Celebrity Endorsement

There are some models that have been mentioned in the literature regarding the celebrity endorsement attributes. These models aim to understand how different aspects of the source, can impact consumer perceptions and attitudes in marketing contexts and lead to the effectiveness of advertising. Some of these models are been explained below:

Source Model of Ohanian (1990):

The Source Credibility Model, proposed by Ohanian (1990), asserts that the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements is primarily determined by the perceived credibility of the endorser, which comprises two key components: expertise and trustworthiness. Research by Hovland and colleagues (1951, 1953) highlights that a persuasive message's effectiveness is

heavily influenced by the source's credibility. Higher credibility enhances persuasion and fosters more favorable brand attitudes.

The model emphasizes the necessity of selecting endorsers with relevant knowledge and a trustworthy image. Credibility is crucial for shaping consumer attitudes through a process called internalization, where the audience values the information provided (Kelman, 1961; Biswas et al., 2006). Consumers are more likely to accept arguments from credible endorsers and less likely to do so from those perceived as less credible (Grewal et al., 1994).

For an endorser to be deemed credible, the perceived levels of expertise and trustworthiness are essential, even more so than the endorser's actual competence (Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1991). Expertise reflects the endorser's knowledge and experience, while trustworthiness relates to their perceived integrity and impartiality.

The influence of endorser credibility on consumer attitudes has been a significant area of interest in endorsement research, especially from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s, with numerous studies confirming its direct impact on consumer attitudes and intentions (Choi & Rifon, 2007). Overall, credibility remains a crucial factor in the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements.

TEARS Model of Celebrity Endorsement:

The TEARS model of celebrity endorsement, developed by Terrence A. Shimp in 2003, identifies five crucial factors influencing endorsement effectiveness: Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness, Respect, and Similarity. Trustworthiness relates to the celebrity's perceived honesty, expertise pertains to their knowledge in a specific field, attractiveness addresses their physical appeal, respect is based on their achievements, and similarity reflects how well the audience can relate to the celebrity.

Complementing this, McCracken's Source Model (1989) presents a three-stage meaning transfer framework, asserting that a celebrity's credibility first enhances their public image, which then transfers meaning to the endorsed brand. The effectiveness of this transfer is influenced by the fit between the celebrity and the product, with consumers linking the celebrity's attributes to the brand, thereby shaping perceptions and attitudes. This model emphasizes the cultural context of endorsements, highlighting how consumer beliefs and values impact their success.

Further studies by Dom et al. (2016) and Zakari et al. (2019) reinforce the importance of credibility, integrating attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness, along with the alignment between the celebrity and the product. Pringle and Binet (2005) explore

additional factors, such as the celebrity's fame and financial implications of endorsements.

Seno and Lukas (2007) differentiate between source-based factors, controlled by the celebrity, and management-based factors, overseen by marketing teams, indicating that both aspects are vital for endorsement effectiveness. Overall, research shows that consumers often purchase products not just for functionality but for the symbolic meanings they convey, using consumption to shape identities and enhance social status. McCracken's work on associative learning theory explains how repeated associations between celebrities and brands affect consumer behavior.

Match-up hypothesis

Due to conflicting findings in source models, scholars introduced the match-up hypothesis to guide the selection of celebrity endorsers (Erdogan, 1999; Forkan, 1980; Kamins et al., 1989). McCracken (1989) identified a poor fit between brands and celebrities as a key reason for unsuccessful endorsements. The Match-Up Model emphasizes the importance of congruence between the celebrity's characteristics—such as image, personality, and values—and those of the brand or product. This model suggests that endorsements are more effective when there is a perceived fit; for example, a sportswear brand endorsed by a well-known athlete aligns with the brand's identity related to

fitness and performance. Conversely, mismatches can lead to skepticism and negative consumer perceptions, reducing the endorsement's effectiveness. The Match-Up Model highlights that consumers respond more positively to endorsements that meet their expectations of both the celebrity and the brand, demonstrating the importance of strategic selection in celebrity partnerships to enhance marketing effectiveness (Kamins and Gupta, 1994).

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), developed by Petty and Cacioppo in 1986, explains how individuals are persuaded and process persuasive information. This psychological theory outlines two routes for attitude change: the central route and the peripheral route. The central route involves careful evaluation of the message and source credibility, leading to lasting attitude changes. In contrast, the peripheral route relies on superficial cues, such as attractiveness or likability (Schumann et al., 2012). Celebrity endorsements can trigger either route, influenced by the consumer's motivation and ability to process the message.

Several factors affect whether individuals engage in central or peripheral processing. Motivation is key; when a topic is personally relevant, deep processing via the central route is more likely. Conversely, irrelevant topics may prompt reliance on

peripheral cues. The ability to process information also matters; those with knowledge are more inclined to engage deeply, while distractions may lead to superficial processing. Emotional states, message characteristics, and the credibility of the source further influence processing routes. Additionally, contextual factors like social environment can impact how persuasive messages are received, ultimately determining the depth of engagement with the information. Together, these elements determine how likely a person is to engage deeply with a message versus relying on superficial cues (O’Keefe, 2013).

3. Attributes of Celebrity Endorsement

Credibility

Credibility is a critical attribute of celebrity endorsement. It encompasses two primary dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness. A celebrity perceived as knowledgeable in a relevant field is more likely to be viewed as credible. For instance, athletes endorsing sports products or health professionals promoting wellness products leverage their expertise to build trust with consumers. It is the extent to which the recipient sees the source as having relevant knowledge, skills, or experience and trusts the source to give unbiased, objective information (Belch & Belch, 2018). Celebrities who are credible can persuade consumers to believe claims about a brand if they have relevant knowledge, skills or experience and are perceived

to be unbiased (Ohanian, 1990). Celebrity credibility refers to the extent to which a source is perceived as possessing expertise and can be trusted to give an objective opinion on the subject (Goldsmith et al., 2000). Endorser credibility is a higher-order construct consisting of three sub-dimensions, attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness, according to the source model theory (La Ferle and Choi, 2005; Ohanian, 1990).

Attractiveness

Attractiveness, encompassing a celebrity's physical appeal and charisma, positively influences consumer attitudes toward brands. Research suggests that attractive endorsers can create a "halo effect," where consumers transfer their positive feelings about the celebrity to the endorsed product. Kahle and Homer (1985) assert that physical attractiveness acts as a significant informational signal that transcends cultural boundaries. However, Till and Busler (2000) argue that expertise is a more relevant factor for matching endorsers with brands, noting that the connection between attractiveness and product relevance may not be clear. Supporting this, Bower and Landreth (2001) found that "normal-looking" endorsers often elicit more favorable reactions than highly attractive ones, even for beauty-related products. Despite these nuances, physically appealing celebrity endorsers generally enhance a brand's image and can motivate consumer purchases (Hakimi et al., 2011).

Expertise

Erdogan (1999) defines expertise as the extent to which a celebrity is perceived to hold valid knowledge, skills, or experience, making them a credible source of information. Trustworthiness, on the other hand, refers to the honesty and integrity of the endorser as perceived by the audience (Ohanian, 1991; Singh & Banerjee, 2018). While expertise involves the source's ability to provide accurate assertions, trustworthiness reflects the audience's confidence in the source's intent to communicate these assertions (Hovland et al., 1953). Horai et al. (1974) highlight that expertise stems from an individual's capacity to share knowledge based on their education and experience.

Research indicates that knowledgeable celebrity endorsers can significantly influence consumer purchasing decisions (Ohanian, 1991). Erdogan (1999) emphasizes that the audience's perception of an endorser's competence often outweighs the actual expertise they possess. Hovland and Weiss (1953) found that credibility, which includes expertise, positively impacts opinion change. Furthermore, Amos et al., (2008) suggest that expertise has a greater influence than overall credibility, while Aaker and Meyers (1987) affirm that knowledgeable endorsers are more effective in driving product sales.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a key component of source credibility, but research indicates it does not significantly boost consumers' intentions to try a brand (Hakimi et al., 2011; Ohanian, 1991). Defined as the dignity, believability, and honesty perceived in an endorser (Friedman et al., 1976), trustworthiness shapes how consumers view the credibility of the communicated message (Hovland and Weiss, 1951). Effective brand promotion strategies often involve associating with celebrities perceived as honest and reliable. The efficacy of celebrity endorsers can enhance perceived trustworthiness among consumers (Horai et al., 1974; Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Mishra et al., 2015). This process, termed "meaning transfer" in celebrity endorsement, suggests a connection between perceived expertise and trustworthiness (Erdem and Swait, 2004). Studies show significant relationships between these constructs across various product categories, indicating that greater perceived expertise leads to enhanced trustworthiness, regardless of the industry involved.

Familiarity

Belch and Belch (2001) define familiarity as the resemblance derived from the knowledge gained through exposure to a celebrity endorser. Minh Ha and Hung Lam (2017) identify key elements indicating celebrity familiarity, including the frequency of celebrity appearances in advertisements, attendance at events, and online

presence. Familiarity is associated with improved persuasive outcomes, as noted by Garcia-Marques and Mackie (2001).

Celebrity familiarity reflects how much consumers know about an endorser and their ability to recognize them quickly (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019a). McCracken (1989) suggests that a celebrity's prominence in media and their professional background contribute to their familiarity. Additionally, Spry et al. (2011) argue that physical appearance and behavior enhance this familiarity.

Marketers leverage celebrity familiarity to connect consumers with products, as prior knowledge of a celebrity fosters relatability (Roy & Rishav, 2014; Um & Jang, 2020). This familiarity often creates an emotional attachment, which can translate to the endorsed product (Ha & Lam, 2017; Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019a). Ultimately, familiarity captures consumer attention and enhances buying behavior, emphasizing its relevance in marketing strategies (Khalid & Yasmeen, 2019).

Similarity

Similarity, as defined by Erdogan (1999), refers to the perceived resemblance between the source of a message and its receiver, while familiarity pertains to the knowledge gained through exposure. Similarity encompasses characteristics such as gender, age, and ethnicity, influencing how consumers relate to

celebrity endorsers. This resemblance is crucial in marketing, as consumers are more likely to trust and engage with messages from sources that share their characteristics. Research indicates that when consumers feel aligned with a celebrity's opinions, it positively impacts their purchase intentions (Karen et al., 2015).

In essence, if consumers perceive a close similarity or commonality with a celebrity, they are more inclined to buy the endorsed product. This connection enhances the persuasive power of the endorsement. Consequently, marketers often choose relatable, everyday celebrities to strengthen consumer bonds (Belch and Belch, 2001). The perceived similarity between celebrity endorsers and their target audience significantly boosts the effectiveness of endorsements, as shared values, demographics, or lifestyles foster favorable responses to promoted products.

Likability

Likability refers to the affection consumers feel toward a celebrity, influenced by their physical appearance and behavior. Fleck et al. (2012) found that a celebrity's likability significantly enhances the likability of the endorsed brand. Tantisenepong et al. (2012) emphasized that while likability is crucial in celebrity endorsements, it is often overlooked in existing source models. A likable celebrity fosters a favorable emotional connection with consumers, leading to increased brand recall and positive attitudes.

Celebrity likability encompasses the positive or negative feelings consumers have toward the endorser (Mowen and Minor, 1998). It reflects how well the celebrity's behavior aligns with the audience's desires, making them more relatable. Research indicates that ad likability is a strong predictor of brand likability, with likable spokespersons enhancing consumer attention and loyalty (Urde, 1994). Consequently, brands associated with admired personalities are more likely to resonate positively with consumers, significantly impacting their purchasing behavior.

4.Conclusion

This research paper delves into celebrity endorsement, examining its advantages and risks in modern marketing. Celebrity advocates significantly influence consumer behavior and brand visibility by leveraging traits like credibility, attractiveness, and likability, which can enhance brand image and consumer perception. Various theoretical models support effective celebrity endorsements: the Source Model of Ohanian emphasizes credibility, the TEARS Model highlights emotional traits, the McCracken Source Model discusses cultural meanings, and the Match-Up Hypothesis underscores the importance of alignment between the celebrity and the product. The Elaboration Likelihood Model suggests endorsements resonate more with engaged audiences.

Despite these benefits, brands face risks such as negative publicity, scandals, and misalignment with brand values, which can damage reputation. Therefore, strategic planning is crucial when selecting endorsers. Marketers should conduct thorough research on celebrities' public images and past controversies to mitigate negative associations. Establishing a match between the celebrity's attributes and the target audience enhances credibility and emotional impact. Long-term relationships with celebrities can foster authentic consumer connections, and marketers should prepare crisis management plans for potential fallout.

To maximize the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements, brands should utilize multiple marketing channels and monitor their impact through metrics. By balancing the benefits and risks of celebrity endorsements and applying relevant theories, brands can effectively harness this powerful marketing strategy to achieve their objectives.

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