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## THE IMPACT OF CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT ON BRAND POSITIONING: AN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

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### ABSTRACT

*Celebrity endorsement has been a tried and tested strategy of the marketers in order to break the clutter of commercials and, at the same time, make it noticeable to the audience. Use of celebrity in commercials has certain obvious advantages as some values of celebrities like attention; recall and persuasive appeal are added instantly. However, celebrity endorsement has increased ten times during 2005 to 2015 (www.Tamindia.com). According to a survey, currently sixty per cent of the entire commercials in India featured a celebrity. This has resulted in the cluttering of the celebrities. Thus, the very purpose for which this promotional strategy was devised is being defeated now. Another differentiation strategy in the hands of marketers is Brand positioning. It refers to creating a distinct favourable image of the brand and crafting a desired position of the brand vis-à-vis competitors in the minds of consumers. The question arises as to whether any relationship exists between celebrity endorsement and brand positioning and how far these celebrities are effective in positioning the brands they endorse? After all, employment of a celebrity entails a heavy outlay which any company can ill afford to squander away. This paper aims at finding the answers to these questions.*

### KEYWORDS

Celebrity, Celebrity endorsement, brand, brand positioning, Celebrity value.

### INTRODUCTION

Celebrity endorsement began in India in the early fifties. Some bigger companies from their global experience introduced the concept of celebrity endorsement. HLL has used Hindi film stars to endorse their beauty soap 'Lux' since the fifties in their famous campaign *Filmy Sitara Ka Soundarya sabun*.

The introduction of TV in India and events like ASIAD in 1982 and World-Cup cricket victory in 1983 ushered in the era of celebrity endorsement in India in a big way. The late eighties saw the beginning of celebrity endorsement in advertising in India. Hindi film and TV stars as well as sports personalities began encroaching on territory that was until then the exclusive domain of models. There was a spurt in advertising featuring stars like Tabassum (Prestige Pressure Cooker), Jalal Agha (Pan Parag), Kapil Dev (Palmolive Shaving Cream) and Sunil Gavaskar (Dinesh Suitings). Of course, probably the first Ad. to cash in on star power in a strategic, long term, mission statement kind of way was for Lux soap, a brand which has, perhaps as a result of this, been among the top three in the country for much of its lifetime. Detergents, on the other hand, ran the whole gamut of Lalitajee-the antithesis of a celebrity to Shekhar Suman stepping into the lives of ordinary housewives. (Blonnet. April 2003)

Ohanion has defined a celebrity as "A person who is widely recognized in the society where attributes like attractiveness, extraordinary lifestyle or special skills are just examples and specific common characteristics cannot be observed." It can be said that within a corresponding social group, celebrities generally differ from the social norm and enjoy a high degree of public awareness. Today's celebrities are larger figures from movies (Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Priyanka Chopra), television (Mukesh Khanna, Shweta Tiwari) and sports (Sachin Tendulkar, M S Dhoni, Sanya Mirza), etc.

McCracken's (1989) defines a celebrity endorser as, "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement". According to Friedman & Friedman, "a celebrity endorser is an individual who is known by the public for his or her achievements in areas other than that of the product class endorsed."

According to Art Buchwald (1999), "The use of Celebrity in order to increase the sales and/or recall value of the brand is called Celebrity Endorsement". For example, in the Coca-Cola advertisement, actor Aamir Khan is the celebrity endorser for the product or brand called Coke and this process is referred to as Celebrity Endorsement.

Brand positioning refers to creating a distinct and favourable image of the brand in the mind of consumer and crafting a desired positioning of the brand vis-à-vis competitor's offerings. Positioning has evolved from measurement of consumer perceptions and literature of perceptual mapping (Arnott, 1994). The main aim of the companies is to somehow generate a distinctive space of the brand in the consumers' mind, generally termed as 'positioning' (Ries and Trout, 1981). Positioning is the concept that changed the view of the advertisement and it is not what you do to a product, but it is what you do to the mind of the prospect (Trout & Ries, 2003; Sengupta, 2005; Sagar et. al, 2009). Basically the essence of positioning concept is to position the product or service or to situate or to do mapping of the brand as a distinctive space in the consumers' mind (Sengupta, 2005; Sagar et. al, 2009). Positioning in the view of (Kotler, 1997) is the process of designing the company's products and service image based on consumer perceptions relative to that of competitors. A strong brand always built upon the association of the consumers with the brand (Sagar et. al, 2009)

### LITERATURE REVIEW ON CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT

According to Kaikati (1987), use of celebrities in MARCOMs (Marketing Communications) began in the late Nineteenth Century. However, momentum picked up with the emergence of cinema during 1920s. But, its present day popularity, as per McDonough (1995), owes much to the growth of commercial radio during 1930s and to the commercial television during 1950s. Initially, 'stars' were reluctant to endorse products and brands as they were apprehensive of their image getting jeopardized. However, during 1970s, such trends faded as the number of films and television roles expanded (Thompson, 1978). Therefore, trend to utilize celebrity endorsers in MARCOM activities increased sharply. In 1979, celebrity endorsers' use in commercials was estimated as one in every six advertisements (Howard 1979) which rose to one in five in 1988 (Motavalli) and, thereafter, Shimp claimed around 25% of all US based commercials utilize celebrities in 1997. Almost same trend was found in UK as well (a report in *Marketing*, 1996). Therefore, it seems safe to argue that utilising celebrities within commercials has reached such a level that it can be accepted as a fairly common MARCOM strategy.

In India, celebrities were engaged for the first time by Hindustan Lever Limited (HLL) when All India Radio began its commercial services in the year 1951. HLL hired the services of the top actresses of the period to endorse their bathing soap brand 'Lux'. But, the actual and visible growth began only after launching of satellite television services in India in the early 1980s.

Authors like Atkin and Block (1983) observed that celebrities are hired for their qualities like likeability and attractiveness which get transferred to products via MARCOM activities. Langmeyer, Walker and McCracken (1989) share this view. However, author like B. Zafer Erdogan cautioned against the risks and hazards of employing a celebrity to endorse a brand through his paper in the *Journal of Marketing* (1990) in which he presented a model of pros and cons of celebrity endorsement strategy. Further, Croft, Dean and Kitchen (1996) have drawn the attention of the advertisers towards recent technological innovations which result in increasing consumer power over programmed advertisements.

Hofstede (1984) and Mooij (1994) highlighted the impediments in positioning due to cultural roadblocks of the host countries in case of global marketing such as time, space, language, relationships, power, risk, masculinity, femininity, etc. However, utilization of powerful global celebrities like Cindy Crawford, Linda Evangelista and Pamela Anderson have been able to overcome such roadblocks for Pizza Hut International.

Authors like Cooper (1984), Kaikati (1987), Klebba and Unger (1982), Till and Shimp (1995) have cautioned against the potential hazards of hiring celebrities to endorse a brand. Belch and Belch voiced their concern for the impact of other variables such as brand awareness, recall of copy points and message arguments,



brand attitude, and purchase intentions apart from mere attention value of the celebrities. Rossiter and Percy (1987) expressed their apprehension of celebrity overshadowing the brand being endorsed. Authors like Mowen and Brown (1981), Graham (1989), Cooper and Tripp et. al. (1994) raised the issue of over exposure of the celebrities due to their multibrand endorsement. They opined that such trends can lead to a serious credibility crisis of the celebrities.

### LITERATURE REVIEW ON BRAND POSITIONING

The real basis of positioning is a moot point. Nylén (1990) believe that its roots lie in the studies of 1940 in the literature of marketing-mix, whereas authors like Myers and Tauber (1977), Ries and Trout (1986), Kotler (1997) consider positioning as a new concept which evolved from market segmentation during 1960s and early 1970s. Yet another school of thought (Arnott, 1994) views that positioning has evolved from measurement of consumer perceptions' and literature of perceptual mapping.

However, in relatively recent past, it was the paper by Jack Trout titled 'Positioning is a game people play in today's me-too in the market place' in the publication 'Industrial Marketing', which created a lot of buzz among marketing circles. Further, the concept of positioning was then popularized by Al Ries and Jack Trout in their bestseller book 'Positioning- The Battle for your mind', (McGraw Hill, 1981) in which they defined positioning as "an organized system for finding a window. It is based on the concept that communication can only take place at the right time and under the right circumstances. The main aim of positioning is somehow generating a distinctive space of the brand in the consumers' mind vis-à-vis competing brands.

### NEED/ IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Though celebrity endorsement has been a sound MARCOM strategy over the years in consumer goods industry, it has some serious risks and hazards. Celebrities, at the end of the day, are human beings and hence susceptible to committing mistakes. For example, the controversies involving film star Salman Khan and cricketer Shrisant are cases in point. Brand celebrity mismatch can lead to failure of the brand or wrong positioning as in the case of 'Maruti Varsa' which was positioned as a family sedan and endorsed by the superstar Amitabh and Abhishek Bachchan. Despite, it failed miserably as the audience didn't believe that stars like Bachchans would ever ride such an economy car.

Employing a celebrity to endorse a brand involves huge amount of money and hence it is pertinent to justify their use specially in case of brand positioning. In order to safeguard from such hazards and provide a framework, it is logical to ascertain the efficacy of celebrity endorsement and its relationship with brand positioning.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The rise in celebrity advertisement has been attributed to cluttering of media which has seen an increase in the number of brands advertised on TV from around 3,000 a decade ago to almost 11,500 (India Today – December 2004). It is said that for the same period, the number of commercials being aired is up by over 3,000 per cent (India Today – December 2004). Research conducted by leading Indian research agency IMRB indicated that 86 % of the respondents say the most prominent advertisement that they remember has a celebrity in it (The Economic Times – 28 March, 2008). According to an estimate, the celebrity endorsement market is considered to be worth more than Rs. 10,000 million (\$ 200 million) business (The Economic Times – 3 February, 2010).

Cluttering of the advertisements and the celebrity endorsements has made the task of marketer extremely challenging. Breaking the clutter has become a daunting task. The exponential increase in the number of television channels coupled with the emergence of new media have only added fuel to the fire.

### OBJECTIVES

1. To propose a model of relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand positioning
2. To find out the attention value of the celebrity
3. To know the recall value of the celebrity
4. To find out the conviction value of the celebrity
5. To know the connection value of the celebrity
6. To ascertain the persuasive appeal of the celebrity
7. To explore relationship between celebrity total value and brand positioning

### HYPOTHESES

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between celebrity's attention value and brand positioning.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between celebrity's recall value and brand positioning.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between celebrity's conviction value and brand positioning.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between celebrity's connection value and brand positioning.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between celebrity's persuasive appeal and brand positioning.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research with the help of a sample survey of 100 consumers was carried out in the city of Patna among consumers above 15 yrs. age. Simple random sampling method was adopted. Primary as well as secondary data were collected. A structured questionnaire was used as an instrument to elicit primary data from the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of part A and part B. Part A solicited demographic data of the respondents whereas part B contained questions on conceptual variables. One question was asked on each variable. A five-point Likert-scale (1 for minimum and 5 for maximum) was used to frame questions. Out of 100 questionnaires, 98 were found valid and two were incomplete. Cronbach alpha was applied to test the reliability and consistency of the questionnaire. Chi-square test was applied to test the hypotheses.

### METHOD OF SELECTION OF TV COMMERCIALS

In order to zero in on the required commercials, it was decided to figure out top five celebrities endorsing various brands first. The help of internet was taken for the purpose. But internet revealed data for many years and that's why the most recent list of top ten Indian celebrity endorsers in terms of their brand value was taken from the website with URL <http://www.firstpost.com/business/money/brand-wars> on April 22, 2016. Out of this list of top ten Indian celebrity endorsers, three male celebrities (i.e., Shahrukh Khan, Ranveer Kapoor and M.S. Dhoni) holding the top three slots and two female celebrities (i.e., Dipeeka Padukone and Katrina Kaif) holding the 7th and 9th positions in the list were selected in order to make it more representative and offer variety.

Once the celebrities were selected, a search was done in order to ascertain the brands endorsed by the aforesaid celebrities. As the scope of the study was limited to the brands of Multinational companies, commercials endorsed by the selected celebrities were segregated on the basis of ownership, i.e., National or Multinational companies. Thereafter, five commercials of multinational companies which were very popular, frequently aired and were most visible on TV during the period of study, i.e., 2014-2016 were picked up on the basis of the frequency, popularity and visibility.

TABLE 1: SELECTED CELEBRITIES AND THEIR COMMERCIALS

Sl.	Commercials	Celebrities
1.	Hyundai Xccent	Shahrukh Khan (SRK)
2.	Froto-Lays	Ranveer Kapoor (RK)
3.	Sony Xperia Z1	Katrina Kaif (KK)
4.	Garnier Face Cream	Deepika Padukone (DP)
5.	Reebok Shoes	Mahendra Singh Dhoni (MSD)

TABLE 2: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative % age
<b>• Gender</b>			
Female	49	50	50
Male	49	50	100
Total	98	100	100
<b>• Age-Group</b>			
15-30 yrs.	45	45.91	45.91
31-45 yrs.	28	28.57	74.48
46-60 yrs.	16	16.32	90.80
61yrs. & above	09	09.18	100
Total	98	100	100
<b>• Educational Level</b>			
Middle School	15	15.30	15.30
High School	22	22.44	37.74
Graduation	32	32.65	70.39
Post-graduation	22	22.44	92.83
Ph.D.	07	07.14	100
Total	98	100	100
<b>• Income-Group</b>			
Up to Rs. 2,00,000 P/A	18	18.36	18.36
Rs.2,00,001-4,00,000 P/A	27	27.55	45.91
Rs.4,00,001-6,00,000 P/A	43	43.87	89.78
Rs. 6,00,001 P/A & above	10	10.20	100
Total	98	100	100
<b>• Occupation</b>			
Farmer	09	9.18	9.18
Student	25	25.51	34.69
Business	14	14.28	48.97
Govt. Service	10	10.20	59.17
Pvt. Service	18	18.36	77.53
Self-employed	16	16.32	93.85
Retired	16	06.62	100
Total	98	100	100

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Celebrity value was taken as independent variable and Brand Positioning as dependent variable for the study. Celebrity value was further classified into five elements, viz., Attention Value (AV), Recall Value (RV), Conviction Value (CV), Connection Value (CnV) and Persuasive Appeal (PA).

TABLE 3: MEAN SCORES OBTAINED BY CELEBRITIES ON THEIR DIFFERENT ATTRIBUTES

Variable	SRK	RK	DP	KK	MSD
AV	12.69	11.46	13.01	12.87	13.85
RV	89.58	75.00	80.20	82.29	92.70
CV	24.46	26.16	23.74	22.86	26.04
CnV	23.69	25.02	23.32	22.89	25.67
PA	33.79	32.96	34.42	34.56	34.63
Total	184.21	170.16	174.69	175.47	192.89
<b>Mean</b>	<b>36.84</b>	<b>34.03</b>	<b>34.93</b>	<b>35.09</b>	<b>38.57</b>

Source: Author

**FINDINGS**

On the basis of table 3, it was found that the Attention value of M.S. Dhoni is the highest closely followed by Dipeeka Padukone. Katrina Kaif, Shah Rukh Khan and Ranveer Kapoor held third, fourth and fifth positions respectively.

As regards Recall value, M.S. Dhoni again holds the top slot followed by Shah Rukh Khan, Katrina Kaif, Dipeeka Padukone and Ranveer Kapoor in the same order. However, when it comes to Conviction Value, Ranveer Kapoor grabs the first position followed by M.S. Dhoni, Shah Rukh Khan, Dipeeka Padukone and Katrina Kaif respectively.

As far as Connecting with the audience is concerned, again M.S. Dhoni is at the top closely followed by Ranveer Kapoor. Shah Rukh Khan, Dipeeka Padukone and Katrina Kaif held third, fourth and fifth slot respectively.

Once again M.S. Dhoni was found to be most persuasive among all closely followed by Katrina Kaif and Dipeeka Padukone. Shah Rukh Khan and Ranveer Kapoor stood at fourth and fifth place respectively.

Conclusively, M.S. Dhoni holds top slot in terms of Total Celebrity Value followed by Shah Rukh Khan, Katrina Kaif, Dipeeka Padukone and Ranveer Kapoor in the same order.

TABLE 4: RELIABILITY TEST

ID	Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N (items)	Cronbach's alpha
AV	Attention value	2.69	1.10	3	0.55
RV	Recall value	3.87	0.80	2	0.73
CV	Conviction value	3.53	0.81	6	0.75
CnV	Connection value	3.45	0.83	5	0.53
PA	Persuasive appeal	3.43	0.83	7	0.77
BP	Brand Positioning	3.72	1.03	5	0.50

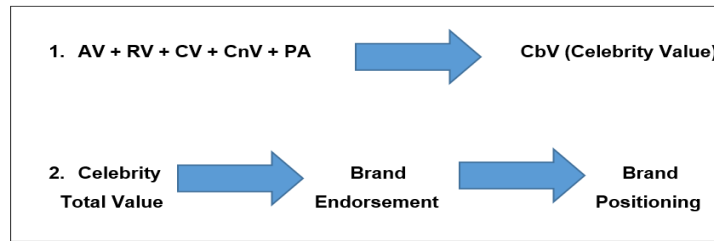
Source: author

**PROPOSED MODELS**

Two basic constructs were developed for the purpose of the study. First model describes the relationship between different attributes of the celebrities and celebrity total value. In other words, the collective strength of individual attribute of the celebrities leads to the total celebrity value.

Second model establishes relationship between celebrity total value and brand positioning. As per model II, Celebrity value is transferred through brand endorsement (commercial) which leads to brand positioning. That means, greater the celebrity total value stronger is the positioning. Therefore, the process of brand positioning involves the interplay of the individual attributes of the celebrity, celebrity total value and endorsement, i.e., the combination of the two models.

FIG. 1: A MODEL DEPICTING CELEBRITY VALUE AND ITS DIFFERENT ELEMENTS AND ASSUMED



Source: Author

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

TABLE 5: RESULTS OF HYPOTHESES TEST

Hypothesis	df	Level of significance	Critical value	Chi-square value	Result
H <sub>01</sub>	4	0.05	0.711	9.71	Rejected
H <sub>02</sub>	4	0.05	0.711	20.15	Rejected
H <sub>03</sub>	4	0.05	0.711	55.09	Rejected
H <sub>04</sub>	4	0.05	0.711	12.91	Rejected
H <sub>05</sub>	4	0.05	0.711	161.54	Rejected

CONCLUSION

We have checked the significance of association between the celebrity value and brand positioning by developing five hypotheses. All the null hypotheses were rejected which makes alternative hypotheses true. Thus, it can be concluded that

- There is significant relationship between Attention Value of the celebrities and Brand Positioning.
- There is significant relationship between Recall Value of the celebrities and Brand Positioning.
- There is significant relationship between Conviction Value of the celebrities and Brand Positioning.
- There is significant relationship between Connection Value of the celebrities. and Brand Positioning
- There is significant relationship between Persuasive Appeal of the celebrities and Brand Positioning.

Thus, it is concluded on the basis of the above discussion that there is significant relationship between celebrity value and brand positioning. This proves our proposed model.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to time and resource constraints, the sample size was kept low which may have impact on the precision of the results. On account of the same reason, the sample was taken from Patna only and hence the results cannot be generalized for entire India.

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