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ENSURING A SUCCESSFUL CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MATCH-UP HYPOTHESIS AND MEANING TRANSFER MODEL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the purpose of the paper is to study and evaluate the two important theories regarding the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements. First being the celebrity product Match-up Hypothesis according to which the similarity between the celebrity endorser and the product leads to positive attitudes and purchase intentions. Second is the Meaning transfer model which lays importance to the transfer of cultural meanings associated with the celebrity and to the product in ensuring a successful celebrity endorsement campaign. In the first part both these theories were reviewed with help of past literature. In second part a comparative qualitative evaluation of both theories was done with the help of a practical example of a successful celebrity endorsement. For this purpose, Amitabh Bachchan's endorsement for Cadbury Dairy Milk Chocolate after the 'Worm Controversy' was selected. Finally, the findings and the implications for practice were derived at the end.

KEYWORDS
celebrity endorsements, match-up hypothesis, meaning transfer model.

INTRODUCTION
Data shows that Celebrity endorsement is a continuously growing strategy. Advertisers use this strategy to break through the "advertisement clutter" and reach their target consumers and they also succeed to a great extent. However, keeping in mind the enormous cost associated with celebrity endorsements, 'breaking through the clutter' is not the only thing that should be intended through celebrity endorsements. Apart from it, the celebrity endorsers should also be effective in generating positive attitudes and purchase intentions towards the product or service that is being advertised. Earlier studies such as 'Source Models' stressed only on celebrity specific characteristics in ensuring an effective celebrity endorsement. According to these studies the physical attractiveness, trustworthiness and the perceived expertise of the celebrity endorsers are the most important determinants of their effectiveness in influencing attitudes and purchase intentions. These models were criticized by many researchers stating that they fail to capture other important aspects which are also equally important such as the product and the consumers. Further, many practical examples of celebrity endorsements also highlighted the inefficiency of the source models in ensuring a successful celebrity endorsement. Therefore, two other alternative theories were proposed to overcome the inabilities of the source models and to help the advertisers in successfully capitalizing the celebrities. One was the Celebrity Product Match-Up Hypothesis and the other was Meaning Transfer Model. In the coming chapters, both these theories have been reviewed and then a comparative analysis has been undertaken using a practical example.

THE MATCH-UP HYPOTHESIS
The "Celebrity-Product Match-Up" proposition holds that in order to make an advertisement effective, there must be congruence or fit between the product and the celebrity in terms of characteristics such as image, expertise or attractiveness (Till & Busler, 2000). As early as 1979, Friedman and Friedman explored how the effectiveness of the endorsers differed by product types. The authors suggest that the type of endorser used should be considered very carefully. If the risk involved is social and/or psychological, then the advertiser should consider using a celebrity as an endorser. If the product is high in financial, performance or physical risk, then the advertiser should consider an expert endorser. For the products that have little inherent risk, the advertiser should choose a typical consumer endorser. Forkan (1980) proposed the match-up hypothesis for celebrity selection when he suggested that the message conveyed by the image of a celebrity and the message about a product should converge in an effective advertisement and therefore, implies a need for a congruity between the celebrity image and the product image. The perfect congruence between endorser and product may lead to great endorser believability through the identification process (Langmeyer & Walker, 1991b) and favourably influence consumer attitudes toward ads and products as well as purchase intention. On the other hand, Shimp (2008) stresses that most fundamentally an endorser must match up well with the endorsed brand target market. This is because the first question that a brand manager must pose when selecting an endorser is "Will the target market relate positively to this endorser?" (p. 307).

ATTRACTIVENESS BASED MATCH-UP
Much of the research on celebrity match-up or congruity investigates the appropriateness of the match between an endorser and a product based on the endorser physical attractiveness. Usually, the researchers examine the match between celebrity's physical attractiveness and the product advertised. Kahle and Homer (1985), for example, discover if there were congruence between the two, the match-up hypothesis would predict a positive impact upon the product and advertisement evaluations. In other words, if the product is related to attractiveness, then attractiveness of the celebrity endorser counts. Because earlier research did not fully test the attractiveness aspect of the match-up hypothesis i.e. the studies did not demonstrate that an attractive celebrity was less effective when endorsing a product not used to enhance one's attractiveness, Kamins (1990) uses a physically attractive celebrity and an attractive-unrelated product in his study. The findings revealed that for an attractiveness related product, use of a physically attractive celebrity significantly enhanced measures of spokesperson credibility, relative to use of a physically unattractive celebrity. Furthermore, an increase in the physical attractiveness of a celebrity endorser had no significant impact on advertisement- and product-based evaluations for an attractiveness-irrelevant product.

EXPERTISE BASED MATCH-UP
Till and Busler (1998) point out that physical attractiveness is not the most powerful dimension for generating a match-up, because the logical link between attractive endorser and product used to enhance one's attractiveness seems weak. Some researchers have considered the other two dimensions of source credibility –expertise and trustworthiness. In expertise match-up a celebrity who is perceived as expert in a field is used for endorsing a product related to that particular field, for example an athlete endorsing an energy drink or a sport shoe. Till and Busler (1998) examine the role of physical attractiveness versus expertise as match-up factors in the endorsement process and suggest that expertise dimension might be more valuable than attractiveness in matching celebrity endorsers with brands.

IMAGE BASED MATCH-UP
Image-based match-up means matching highly accessible celebrity associations with highly accessible brand association's congruence. Using jeans and a board game, among others, Misra and Beatty (1990) found that if the products were matched with Celebrities having similar images respectively, they would result in a higher brand attitude than the converse. Similarly, Kamins and Gupta (1994) found the match-up effect for computers (i.e., resulting in higher spokesperson believability, attractiveness, and brand attitude) but not running shoes, provided the computer was matched with "scientific". However, contrary to the theory, they did not find an effect for a fictitious CEO of an accounting company even though his image "fits" the computer equally. Rice, Kelting and Lutz (2011) also found positive effect of image based match-up on brand attitude. In their experiment two film celebrities i.e. Pierce Brosnan and Vin Diesel having distinct images

of 'Sophisticated' and 'rugged' were paired with two different brands of wrist watches having two different images of 'rugged' and 'sophisticated'. When the pairing was congruent it produced favourable impact on brand attitude.

MEANING TRANSFER MODEL

According to McCraken (1989), the previous models discussed above are not capable of capturing the success factors of the endorsement process, hence he proposed the meaning transfer model as a rich and all-inclusive portrayal of the same, the central premise of which is that celebrities encodes unique sets of meanings which might be transferable to the endorsed product, provided the celebrity is used well. Celebrity Endorsement is a special example of the universal process of meaning transfer which witnesses a conventional movement of cultural meaning in consumer societies. Celebrities are known to be full of different meanings in terms of age, gender, personality and lifestyle. Celebrity endorsers bring their own symbolic meaning to the process of endorsement. Specially the cultural meanings residing in a celebrity go beyond the person itself and are passed on to the products. (McCraken 1989) A model exemplifies a three-stage process of meaning transfer which involves the creation of the celebrity image followed by the transfer of meaning from the celebrity to the brand which again in turn is followed by the transfer of brand image to the customers. In the first stage the meanings associated with the famous person moves from the endorser to the product or the brand, and this meaning is drawn by the celebrity from its public persona. In the second stage, the creation of product personality takes place as the meaning is transferred from the endorser to the consumer. This is based on the symbolic properties conveyed by the endorser. Finally, in the last stage which is known as the consumption process, the brand meaning is attained by the consumer. The consumers who identify themselves with these symbolic properties meanings are transferred to them thereby rendering the process of transfer of the meaning from the celebrity to the consumer complete. The third stage of the model overtly proves the importance of the consumer's role in the process of endorsing brands with famous people (McCraken, 1989). These Cultural meanings then in turn influence the attitudes and purchase intentions of the product.

Two early studies in the area of meaning transfer related to the celebrity endorsements were conducted by Langmeyer and Walker (1991) and Walker, Langmeyer and Langmeyer (1992). Langmeyer and Walker's (1991) study used a celebrity endorser (Cher), a celebrity endorsed product (Scandinavian Health Spa), and a non-endorsed product (bath towel), as stimuli to identify the meaning transfer from endorser to product. The authors found that the celebrities do stand for a set of meanings and the celebrity in the study (Cher) represented different themes in the ad which included her physical appearance, personality and lifestyle. The endorsed product (Scandinavian Health Spa) was found having animate and human associations linked with the celebrity. On the other hand, the unendorsed product (bath towel) generated mostly inanimate associations which were more related to the product functions only. Walker et al. (1992) used a survey-based research to find out the nature of meaning transfer. They used two celebrities and three products for the study. The multiple-item semantic differential scales were used to measure the responses of participants on celebrity's image, brand's image and brand quality. They found that the perceived quality and the image of the brand endorsed were more similar to the celebrity who endorsed it.

Recent studies by Ang, Dubelaar & Kamakura (2007) and Roy & Moorthi (2012) have focused on transfer of personality from celebrity to the brand. Both research-ers found the possibilities of transfer of personality traits from celebrity to a brand in case of celebrity-brand fit.

Choi and Rifon (2007) based on meaning transfer model identified and validated fifteen images that a celebrity can hold. These items were grouped under four dimensions that a celebrity can hold.

TABLE 1: CELEBRITY IMAGE SCALE (Choi and Rifon, 2007)

1 Genuineness
Socially responsible/ Socially Irresponsible
Wise/stupid
Pleasant/unpleasant
Comfortable/uncomfortable
Sophisticated/naive
2 Competence
Strong/weak
Confident/apprehensive
Enthusiastic/not enthusiastic
Determined/undetermined
3 Excitement
Rugged/delicate
Excitable/calm
Dominating/submissive
Masculine/feminine
4 Sociability
Public/private
Bold/shy

THE CASE OF CADBURY INDIA

In the Year 2003 Cadbury's found itself in the eye of a storm, when a few instances of worms in its Dairy Milk bars were reported in Maharashtra. In less than two weeks, the company launched a PR campaign for the trade. In October 2003, just a month before Diwali, customers in Mumbai complained about finding worms in Cadbury Dairy Milk chocolates. Quick to respond, the Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration seized the chocolate stocks manufactured at Cadbury's Pune plant. In defence, Cadbury issued a statement that the infestation was not possible at the manufacturing stage and poor storage at the retailers was the most likely cause of the reported case of worms.

But the FDA was not satisfied. That was followed by allegations and counter-allegations between Cadbury and FDA. The heat of negative publicity melted Cadbury's sales by 30 per cent, at a time when it sees a festive spike of 15 per cent. As a brand under fire, in October itself, Cadbury's launched project 'Vishwas' - an education initiative covering 190,000 retailers in key states. But what the company did in January 2004 is what really helped de-worm the brand. By investing up to Rs 15 crore (Rs 150 million) on imported machinery, Cadbury's revamped the packaging of Dairy Milk. The metallic poly-flow was costlier by 10-15 per cent, but Cadbury didn't hike the pack price. Cadbury roped in brand ambassador Amitabh Bachchan to do some heavy duty endorsement putting his personal equity on the line for the brand. The company upped ad spends for the Jan-March quarter by over 15 per cent. The recovery began in May 2004, and by June, Cadbury's claimed that consumer confidence was back. These experts believe that the reason for Cadbury's success was that it took crisis head-on. And the consumers were more forgiving, because the brand enjoyed an emotional equity in India.

METHODOLOGY

The endorsement done by Amitabh Bachchan for Cadbury was analysed on both aspects of celebrity product match-up and meaning transfer model. One more advertisement Amitabh Bachchan for Parker Pen was selected to study in order to provide a comparison. Eleven experts from the field of marketing and advertising were chosen to study and analyse the campaigns. Each of the experts analysed the campaign separately. The experts analysed the campaigns on two aspects first, celebrity product match-up and second, the meaning transfer model. Following steps were followed for the analysis.

Step 1: The type of match-up used in both campaigns was identified by the experts.

Step 2: Each expert was then asked to give a score out of five to the degree/strength of the match-up used in the campaigns.

Step 3: Each expert was then asked to identify nine most dominant cultural meanings associated with the Amitabh Bacchchan. The meanings were identified using the celebrity meanings scale developed by Choi and Rifon (2007) and the source credibility scale by Ohanian (1990).

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Step 4: By selecting the most recurring or common cultural meanings in the list of each expert, a final list of seven cultural meanings of Amitabh Bachchan was prepared.

Step 5: Each expert then gave a score out of five to the relevance and suitability of the identified celebrity meanings for the brand and the target audience

Step 6: Finally, the mean scores were calculated.

In the Table 2 the analysis and the mean score out five has been present

TABLE 2

Advertisement	1 Amitabh Bachchan for Parker Pen	2 Amitabh Bachchan for Cadbury
Positioning required by the brand	luxury pens for sophisticated people/elite intelligence	A trustworthy brand *
Endorser attractiveness	3.6	3.6
Endorser trustworthiness	4.6	4.6
Endorsers expertise	3	2.3
Type of Match-up	Image based	Image based
Strength of Match-up (Mean score)	3.6	2.2
Celebrity Meanings	Classy, Trustworthy, Honest, Socially Responsible, Elegant, Sophisticated, Determined	Classy, Trustworthy, Honest, Socially Responsible, Elegant, Sophisticated, Determined
Relevance of celebrity meaning for the brand (Mean Score)	4	4.4
Relevance of the celebrity meaning for the target consumers (Mean Score)	4.3	3.5

ANALYSIS

Now we analyse the endorsement done by Amitabh Bachchan for Cadbury on both aspects of celebrity product match-up and meaning transfer model. We have taken two successful endorsements done by Mr. Bachchan one for Parker pen and other for Cadbury chocolate. If we take a look at the endorsement for parker pen, we notice that it was rated higher on both match-up intensity and relevance of celebrity meanings for the brand (705 in case of match-up and 80% in case of relevance of cultural meanings). The positioning of parker was as a luxury pen and was targeted towards high income elite individuals such as CEO's, businessman and other high class professionals. For parker the cultural meanings of Amitabh Bachchan were perfectly suitable. Meanings like 'Classy' 'Elegant' 'Determined' and 'Sophisticated' are required by the brands that wants to position themselves as luxury items. Further, these cultural meanings are highly desirable for the high income elite individuals who were the target consumers. But in the case of Cadbury the celebrity product match-up score was quite low. So how did the endorsement succeed? The answer is that it was not due to the match-up but because of the cultural meanings which Amitabh transferred to Cadbury. Initially Cadbury positioned itself as "Asli swad zindagi ka" (The real Taste of Life) and used to portray the emotions of Joy, love friendship, excitement in its commercials. A brand to celebrate relationship was the kind of image that Cadbury had built over the years. But after the worm controversy the immediate need was to establish trust among the consumers. So it decided to call in Amitabh Bachchan as a brand ambassador and give an emotional testimonial for the Brand. The commercial was intelligently executed. The Cultural meanings of Amitabh Bachchan like Trustworthy, Honest, Socially Reliable, Reliable, determined which were the need of the hour for the brand were transfer to it, while other meanings of the celebrity like Classy Elegant and sophisticated were avoided. Therefore, despite the incongruence between the brand and the celebrity (just 2.2 less than 50%) the endorsement succeeded and it is also evident from the score of the endorsement on relevance of celebrity meanings for the brand and target consumers which stands very high (4.4, more than 80%). More recently Virat kohli's endorsement for Fair and Lovely is another example supports the importance of cultural meanings of the celebrity in delivering a successful advertising campaign. Though Virat Kohli is one of the most attractive Cricketer of current times and also a good match for fair and Lovely (Men's Fairness Cream) this endorsement has not been able to deliver desired results. An important reason being the cultural meanings which Virat Kohli brings to the brand. His prominent cultural meanings of bold, confident and determined and rugged are not perfectly suitable for a fairness cream.

This endorsement case answers another important question which the Match-up Hypothesis was unable to which is related to the role of celebrity in repositioning the brand. In a case of repositioning, the brand, if strictly adheres to celebrity product match-up then it will not be able to reposition itself as incongruence between the celebrity and the brand is required for it to happen and Amiatbh Bachchan's endorsement for Cadbury is the classic example of successful repositioning.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Here are some important practical implications for the advertisers can be inferred. First, the advertisers should not always opt for the most popular celebrity endorser for their brand but should choose the one which offers the cultural meanings required for the brand in the best manner. Second, the cultural meanings which are associated with the celebrity should be relevant and suitable for the brand. As in the case of Parker pen the meanings of Amitabh Bachchan were very suitable and relevant for the brand which was trying to position itself as luxury brand targeted towards CEO, Businessman etc. Third, the advertisers should try to make required cultural meanings of the celebrity prominent in the advertising campaigns and should avoid other meanings associated with the celebrity. Like in the Cadbury campaign the irrelevant cultural meanings were avoided and only the meanings of trustworthiness, socially reliable, determined were highlighted. Lastly, we cannot fully ignore the role of Match-up in celebrity endorsement effectiveness as it has been shown by past research that it is also important especially in the case of high consumer involvement, but apart from ensuring match (if the repositioning of the brand is not required) they should also consider the relevance of cultural meanings when selecting an endorser.

CONCLUSION

Two successful advertisement campaigns done by the celebrity Amitabh Bachchan were analysed in relation to two celebrity endorsement theories. First was Match-up Hypothesis and second was the Meaning Transfer Model. The results show that Meaning Transfer model is more effective explanation of the success of both the advertisement campaigns. It clearly shows that despite low on celebrity product match-up, Amitabh Bachchan's endorsement for Cadbury chocolate was a huge success. Many more similar examples can be found where the celebrity endorsements succeeded without having a high celebrity product match-up because the celebrity delivered the relevant meanings to the product (for example SRK for Hyundai Santro, Zakir hussain for Taj Mahal Tea, Sachin for MRF Tyres) similarly some of them were unsuccessful despite having very high celebrity product match-up because the celebrity meanings were not relevant for the brand and the target audience (for Example Virat Kohli for Fair and Lovely). The Match-up hypothesis relies on only the similarity between the celebrity and the product while the perspective of Meaning Transfer Model is broader. It takes into consideration all the three most important parties involved, the celebrity the product and the target consumers. Meaning Transfer Model considers the process of consumption and transfer of cultural meanings from celebrities to brand and finally to consumers thus giving due importance to all aspects. Further, the meaning transfer model over comes an important problem which match-up hypothesis ignores, the incongruence between the celebrity and product which is required in order to reposition the brand. Thus in the light of this research paper it would be safe to say that meaning transfer model is a more superior and comprehensive approach to study and implement the practice of celebrity endorsements.

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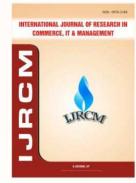
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