

Celebrity Attributes and Influence on Consumer Behaviour – A Study of Shekhawati Region of Rajasthan

Dr. Sushil Kumar Rai*, Ashish Kumar Sharma**

Celebrity endorsement is a useful way of pushing a product in a crowded and competitive Indian market, but it is not a fool-proof one. Marketers use celebrities to break into a market dominated by known brands. Even if the brand is a well-established one, a celebrity may just provide that much-needed thrust to drive sales upwards from dormant levels. Celebrity endorsement and its influence on consumer behaviour has for long been a hot debating issue among modern marketers. While celebrity-supporters readily vouch for the positive effect a celebrity has on consumer behaviour, the anti-celebrity camp seriously views celebrities as 'greedy creatures', desperate to leverage their field name and fame into the world of advertising and further adding another source of income in the process. This paper takes into consideration eight different variables associated with celebrities and tries to investigate their influence, whatsoever, on consumer purchase behaviour. The marketer's chief objective is typically to build a relationship with buyers rather than merely to make a single sale. Ideally, the essence of that relationship consists of a strong bond between the buyer and the brand. This paper intends to find out whether a celebrity acts as a bridge in strengthening this bond. Further, the paper tries to discover if negative issues like celebrity controversies really influence consumer buying behaviour or not.

Key words: Brand, Celebrity, Consumer Behaviour, Endorsement

Introduction

New-age marketing firms all over the world are trying to be different from others, and in the process, devising new strategies to attract the discerning consumers of today. Even in India, more and more marketers are feeling the heat of competition posed by both domestic and foreign firms. Celebrity endorsement is a strategy, which although not a new one, is being adopted by numerous Indian businesses to create an impact on consumer mind, aid in recall, and finally, enhance sales of their respective products and services. Many have profitably attained high brand equity by utilising 'Celebrity Power'. The use of a celebrity is one of the most successful ways of gaining the consumer's attention. The Celebrity Endorsement strategy is a win-win situation for both the marketing firm hiring the celebrity and the celebrity himself/herself. On the one hand, firms consider a celebrity to solve all its marketing woes, be it less recognition in the market or even lesser sales. On the other hand, the chosen celebrity sees endorsements as an additional source of income apart from his/her regular profession. Who would not like earning money for just getting featured with a branded product/service?

Use of celebrities in advertising has been identified as a ubiquitous feature of modern marketing. No longer it is

restricted to just advertising. It is quite common to come across involvement of celebrity faces in sales promotion events like game shows, trade-fairs and so on. Rapid developments in the field of marketing communication have led to the growth of celebrity endorsement as one of the most effective promotion tools for branded products. Advertising and marketing managers spend a great amount of money to have celebrities endorse their products. Advertisements today are considerably more elaborate, complicated and misleading than ever before. The simple practice of using images and a voiceover to portray a brand's properties has since long vanished. Instead, it has been replaced by the use of storylines, creative cinematography and a plethora of endorsements from celebrities amongst other advocates.

The field of Consumer Behaviour is the study of individuals, groups or organisations and the processes involved to select, use and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society. Understanding the nuances of consumer behaviour is one of the toughest and challenging tasks faced by a marketer. There are a lot of factors which influence consumer buying behaviour. Strong positive impact of celebrities in influencing consumer buying behaviour has

*Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Faculty of Arts, Science & Commerce, Mody Institute of Technology & Science, Lakshmangarh, Distt. – Sikar (Rajasthan)

**Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Faculty of Arts, Science & Commerce, Mody Institute of Technology & Science, Lakshmangarh, Distt. – Sikar (Rajasthan)

been widely accepted by the marketing gurus across the globe. The chief motive behind every strategy being followed by a marketer today is not only to satisfy but to delight the customers, and the benefits associated with celebrity endorsement of brands like instant appeal transfer of personality traits to the brand itself, ability to lend credibility and trust, better recall value and adding life and zest to brands are too appealing for marketers to ignore. No wonder, the audience – comprising both current consumers of the brand and the prospects – are inundated with celebrities promoting a host of products. Multiple celebrities are endorsing one brand and super celebrities are endorsing several products.

Review of Literature

Celebrities are people who enjoy public recognition by a large share of a certain group of people whereas attributes like attractiveness, extraordinary lifestyle are just examples and specific common characteristics cannot be observed though 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 (Schlecht, 2003). Celebrities act as spokespersons in advertising to promote products and services (Kambitsis et al, 2002, Tom et al, 1992). A celebrity who represents a brand or company over an extended period of time often in print and TV ads as well as in personal appearances is usually called a company's spokesperson (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1997). The reason for using celebrities as spokespersons goes back to their huge potential influences. Compared to other types of endorsers, famous people achieve a higher degree of attention and recall. 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 consumer's brand attitude and purchase intentions. Specifically, a consumer that observes messages for two different firms' products, one product's message containing a celebrity endorsed and the other not, believes the celebrity endorsed product will have more purchases and so be of higher value (Clark and Horstman, 2003). According to McCracken (1989), a well-known person tends to have a greater effect on the customer buying behaviour.

Today, use of celebrities as part of marketing communications strategy is fairly common practice for major firms in supporting corporate and brand imagery. This practice is not new to advertising. In fact, a survey conducted in the United States by Business Week way back in 1978 found that almost one in three television commercials used celebrity endorsement. The promoter of certain products requires co-ordination over multiple customer groups — different age, income, education groups or groups in different locations. A common set of advertising messages communicated to all customer groups is a more effective and coordinated mechanism than messages targeted at separate customer groups with common messages. The challenge with common

message is of significant audience reach in the various customer groups at low cost. Because the celebrity is recognisable globally, it is a low cost way to achieve cross group coordination (Clark and Horstman, 2003). The marketer hires celebrities to endorse brands because they believe that consumers who are fans and followers of celebrities will consume brands associated with these celebrities. Also, celebrities create and maintain attention, and thus create high recall rates of the commercial (Croft et al, 1996). The reason behind the popularity of celebrity advertising is the advertisers' belief that brand images built through celebrities achieve a higher degree of attention and recall for consumers, which will eventually lead to higher sales.

There is strong evidence to suggest that celebrity advertising delivers a premium in terms of impact. In an analysis of 248 celebrity print advertisements studied by Gallup & Robinson, Inc., over the period 1982-93, celebrity advertisements show about a 34% higher level of awareness than non-celebrity advertisements. Awareness was measured in terms of recall of the advertised brand the day after the advertising exposure. The advertisers hope that this awareness coupled with the attractive and likeable qualities of the celebrity endorser are transferred to the brand, which is being promoted, and they may develop and polish brand/brand image (Mooij, 1994; Dickenson, 1996). Many marketers who have used celebrities in their advertising campaign have certainly obtained good results, e.g., recall rates, sales impact (before and after advertisements). Selecting celebrity endorsers is one key to the success of brands. Celebrity endorsers are effective because they bring to the endorsed brand a host of characteristics that the consumers use in evaluating the brand. A large body of literature exists that has explored the nature of these characteristics. For instance, it is known that celebrity gender, physical attractiveness, trustworthiness, and a vast array of personality characteristics all have an effect on consumer response to a brand's advertisement (Caballero and Pride, 1984; Caballero and Solomon, 1984; Caballero et al., 1989; Debevec and Iyer, 1986; Friedman and Friedman, 1978; Joseph, 1982; Lynch and Shuler, 1994; Ohanian, 1990; 1991; Tripp et al, 1994).

Today, around 20% of all commercials screened in United States (Bradley, 1996) and Great Britain (Erdogan et al, 2001) include some sort of celebrity endorsements and 10% of advertising expenditure goes towards celebrity endorsers (Bradley, 1996). In India, celebrity endorsement is worth more than Rs. 250 crore. Charges per advertisement for stars like Amitabh Bachchan and Shahrukh Khan range anywhere between Rs. 7.5 crore to Rs. 2.5 crore respectively (CNN-IBN, 2007). A lot of research has been conducted on the use of celebrities as an effective technique for marketing a firm's products and services. However, scant information is available on the effect of celebrity attributes on Indian consumer behaviour, leaving important unresolved issues.

Need of the Study

It seems that using a celebrity supposedly lends instant popularity, credibility as well as aspirational value to the brand. There needs to be a match between celebrity endorser's attributes and brand values of the product/service which a marketer desires to project and implant in the minds of consumers. If there is a mis-match between the two, the consequences might be disastrous. This research work attempts to study consumer perception and behaviour regarding various celebrity attributes.

Objectives and Hypotheses

There were two specific objectives of the present study:

1. To study the influence of celebrities on consumer behaviour with respect to branded products and services.
2. To identify the attributes that define the success of using a celebrity in product promotion.

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the present study:

1. Ho : Celebrity attractiveness has no effect on consumer behaviour.
2. Ho : Celebrity controversy has no effect on consumer behaviour.
3. Ho : Celebrity credibility has no effect on consumer behaviour.
4. Ho : Celebrity gender has no effect on consumer behaviour.
5. Ho : Celebrity performance has no effect on consumer behaviour.
6. Ho : Celebrity popularity has no effect on consumer behaviour.
7. Ho : Celebrity profession has no effect on consumer behaviour.
8. Ho : Celebrity territory has no effect on consumer

behaviour.

Research Methodology

Descriptive research design has been used in the present research study. Descriptive research designs are employed to facilitate description and inference building about population parameters and the relationship among two or more variables. Descriptive designs only describe the phenomenon under study attempting to establish a relationship between factors. The present study tries to establish a relationship between various celebrity attributes and influence on consumer behaviour, and so descriptive design was the most appropriate.

This study was conducted using a questionnaire designed to understand consumers' behaviour on multiple products endorsements by celebrities measuring their attractiveness, controversy, credibility, gender, performance, popularity, profession and territory. The questionnaire consisted of a five point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"; with the middle of the scale identified by the response alternative "neither agree nor disagree". The questionnaire was circulated amongst 60 respondents. The sample respondents were selected on the basis of convenient sampling method and the study area was limited to the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan, comprising the districts of Churu, Jhunjhunu and Sikar. The study was undertaken during the period from December 2012 to January 2013. The usual means, standard deviations and regression were calculated to measure the effect of various attributes of celebrities on the behaviour of consumers. Chi-square Test was carried out for rejection or acceptance of hypotheses. The data was analyzed using SPSS 16.0.

Results and Discussion

The descriptive analysis was carried out as shown in Table 1 to determine the central tendency and variability of interval data. It gives us a basic idea as to how the consumers responded on the scale towards the satisfaction or dissatisfaction side. Table 1 depicts that frequency is asymmetrically distributed, and therefore Chi-Square Test has been used to test the hypotheses.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics Results of the Variables

S. No.	Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
1	Attractiveness	3.9000	1.11538	-1.086	.614
2	Controversy	3.9500	.98161	-1.121	1.369
3	Credibility	3.9833	.98276	-.853	.338
4	Gender	1.7500	.85618	1.519	3.159
5	Performance	3.8667	1.14191	-1.355	1.304
6	Popularity	3.9500	1.12634	-1.298	1.233
7	Profession	3.8833	1.19450	-1.064	.324
8	Territory	3.0000	1.55138	-.056	-1.533
9	Consumer-Behaviour	3.3667	.51967	.189	-1.142

Tables 2 and 3 describe the results of regression analysis that is used to elucidate the causal relationship between explanatory

and explained variables.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.840 ^a	.706	.660	.30293

Predictors: (Constant), Attractiveness, Controversy, Credibility, Gender, Performance, Popularity, Profession, Territory.

In Table 2, the value of R (correlation coefficient) is .840 that indicates a high degree of positive correlation between dependent and independent variables, while the value of R-square ($R^2 = .706$) points out that nearly 71% variation in dependent variable is explained by independent variable. The regression equation (1) for this study has been constructed as follows:-

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + b_6X_6 + b_7X_7 + b_8X_8 \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

In the above equation 'a' is a constant that represents the intercept of regression line, whereas 'b_i' explains the change in dependent variable due to one unit change in independent variable

Table 3: Coefficients^A

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant (a)	-.383	.372		-1.028	.309
Attractiveness (X ₁)	.098	.038	.211	2.592	.012
Controversy (X ₂)	.161	.043	.304	3.745	.000
Credibility (X ₃)	.169	.043	.319	3.969	.000
Gender (X ₄)	.103	.050	.170	2.075	.043
Performance (X ₅)	.134	.035	.295	3.807	.000
Popularity (X ₆)	.094	.037	.203	2.501	.016
Profession (X ₇)	.144	.036	.332	4.017	.000
Territory (X ₈)	.143	.028	.426	5.017	.000

A. Dependent Variable: Consumer Behaviour (Y)

Interpretation of Regression Equation: - The values of the parameters are given in equation (2) below:-

$$Y = -.383 + .098X_1 + .161X_2 + .169X_3 + .103X_4 + .134X_5 + .094X_6 + .144X_7 + .143X_8 \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

From equation (2), it is clear that the value of estimator of Attractiveness (X₁) is .098 which shows that a hundred unit change in the value of 'Attractiveness' has a positive effect (9.8 units) on Consumer Behaviour (Y). The value of coefficient of Controversy (X₂) is .161 which reflects that a hundred unit change in the value of 'Controversy' has a positive effect (16.1 units) on dependent variable. The value of slope of Credibility (X₃) is .169 which indicates that a hundred unit change in the value of 'Credibility' has a positive effect (16.9 units) on Consumer Behaviour. The value of gradient of Gender (X₄) is .103 which depicts that a hundred unit change in the value of 'Gender' has a positive effect (10.3 units) on dependent variable. The value of estimator of Performance (X₅) is .134 which shows that a hundred unit change in the value of

'Performance' has a positive effect (13.4 units) on Consumer Behaviour (Y). The value of slope of Popularity (X₆) is .094 which indicates that a hundred unit change in the value of 'Popularity' has a positive effect (9.4 units) on Consumer Behaviour. The value of coefficient of Profession (X₇) is .144 which indicates that a hundred unit change in the value of 'Profession' has a positive effect (14.4 units) on dependent variable. The value of slope of Territory (X₈) is .143 which denotes that a hundred unit change in the value of 'Territory' has a positive effect (14.3 units) on Consumer Behaviour. The significance levels (p-value) for all the explanatory variables are less than .05 ($p < .05$) which indicates that all the independent variables are statistically significant and can be used for the prediction of dependent variable.

Testing of Hypotheses: - The Null Hypotheses formed were tested using Chi-square test. For Hypothesis 1 stating "Celebrity attractiveness has no effect on consumer behaviour", the Chi-square test revealed significant association

Table 4: Chi-Square Test (Consumer Behaviour & Attractiveness)

	Value	Df	(p) Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.386 ^a	8	.052
Likelihood Ratio	13.331	8	.101
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.509	1	.006
N of Valid Cases	60		

a. 11 cells (73.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05

For Hypothesis 2 stating, “Celebrity controversy has no effect on consumer behaviour”, the Chi-square test results are as shown in Table 5 below: -

Table 5: Chi-Square Test (Consumer Behaviour & Controversy)

	Value	Df	(p) Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.689 ^a	8	.570
Likelihood Ratio	8.665	8	.371
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.274	1	.039
N of Valid Cases	60		

a. 10 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03

The significance level (p) is .570 that is greater than .10 ($p > .10$), therefore, the Null Hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is no association between consumer behaviour and controversy.

For Hypothesis 3 stating, “Celebrity credibility has no effect on consumer behaviour”, Table 6 depicts the result of Chi-square test below: -

Table 6: Chi-Square Test (Consumer Behaviour & Credibility)

	Value	Df	(p) Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14.070 ^a	8	.080
Likelihood Ratio	14.735	8	.065
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.938	1	.002
N of Valid Cases	60		

a. 10 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02

The Null Hypothesis is rejected at 90% confidence level because the value of significance level (.080) is less than .10 ($p < .10$). A relationship is found to exist between credibility of celebrity and behaviour of the consumer.

For Hypothesis 4 stating, “Celebrity gender has no effect on consumer behaviour”, Table 7 depicts the result of Chi-square test below: -

Table 7: Chi-Square Test (Consumer Behaviour & Gender)

	Value	Df	(p) Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.770 ^a	8	.877
Likelihood Ratio	4.438	8	.816
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.590	1	.108
N of Valid Cases	60		

a. 11 cells (73.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02

The Null Hypothesis is accepted at 90% confidence level because the value of significance level (.877) is more than .10 ($p > .10$). Therefore, there is no association between consumer behaviour and gender of celebrity.

For Hypothesis 5 stating, “Celebrity performance has no effect on consumer behaviour”, the Chi-square test results are as shown in Table 8 below: -

Table 8: Chi-Square Test (Consumer Behaviour & Performance)

	Value	Df	(p) Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.043 ^a	8	.021
Likelihood Ratio	13.733	8	.089
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.754	1	.016
N of Valid Cases	60		

a. 11 cells (73.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05

The Null Hypothesis is rejected at 90% confidence level because the value of significance level (.021) is less than .10 ($p < .10$). A relationship is found to exist between performance of celebrity and behaviour of the consumer.

For Hypothesis 6 stating, “Celebrity popularity has no effect on consumer behaviour”, the Chi-square test results are as shown in Table 9 below: -

Table 9: Chi-Square Test (Consumer Behaviour & Popularity)

	Value	Df	(p) Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.878 ^a	8	.031
Likelihood Ratio	8.283	8	.406
Linear-by-Linear Association	.060	1	.807
N of Valid Cases	60		

a. 11 cells (73.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05

The Null Hypothesis is rejected at 90% confidence level because the value of significance level (.031) is less than .10 ($p < .10$). A statistically significant association is found to exist between popularity of celebrity and behaviour of the

consumer.

For Hypothesis 7 stating, “Celebrity profession has no effect on consumer behaviour”, the Chi-square test results are as shown in Table 10 below: -

Table 10: Chi-Square Test (Consumer Behaviour & Profession)

	Value	Df	(p) Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.861 ^a	8	.117
Likelihood Ratio	14.481	8	.070
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.885	1	.015
N of Valid Cases	60		

a. 11 cells (73.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .07

The Null Hypothesis is accepted at 90% confidence level because the value of significance level (.117) is more than .10 ($p > .10$). Hence, we can say that there is no association between profession of celebrity and consumer behaviour.

For Hypothesis 8 stating, "Celebrity territory has no effect on consumer behaviour", the Chi-square test results are as shown in Table 11 below: -

Table 11 : Chi-Square Test (Consumer Behaviour & Territory)

	Value	Df	(p) Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.190 ^a	8	.014
Likelihood Ratio	19.033	8	.015
Linear-by-Linear Association	10.431	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	60		

a. 9 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .13

The Null Hypothesis is rejected at 90% confidence level because the value of significance level (.014) is less than .10 ($p < .10$). There is a statistically significant relationship between territory of celebrity and behaviour of the consumer.

Conclusion

Celebrity endorsement has become a buzzword in Indian advertising industry today. The obvious reason for going in for celebrities is the fact that they have a mass appeal and once identified with a product, they can trigger an instant recall in the mind of the consumer. Maybe this is why both Indian corporates as well as MNC's are in race to sign up sportspersons and filmstars to endorse their brands. This study was undertaken to identify the relationship between select parameters associated with celebrities and their effect on consumer buying behaviour. The following conclusions were drawn after a vigorous statistical analysis involving these parameters. Celebrity Controversy, Gender and Profession have no significant influence on consumer behaviour whereas Celebrity Attractiveness, Credibility, Performance, Popularity and Territory significantly influence consumer behaviour. Furthermore, it was proved through regression analysis that credibility of the celebrity has maximum effect on consumer behaviour. Hence, marketing firms must preferably select those celebrities who command a high credibility in the minds of consumers. These outcomes clearly show that various dimensions engaged in celebrity studies have both positive and

negative effects on buying behaviour of consumers. The results reinforce the view of advertisers that celebrities do influence consumer behaviour in some way or the other. Even after their favourite celebrities are embroiled in a major controversy, still the consumers (who it seems have a very short memory) ignore these issues and go ahead with purchasing branded products and services endorsed by them. The consumers also do not pay much attention towards the gender or profession of a celebrity. These results without any doubt underline the loyalty of customers towards their idols and emphasise the idea that celebrities are here to stay in Indian advertising world and nobody dare to ignore their major influence on consumer behaviour.

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