

CELEBRITY MARKETING: INFLUENCE OF TRUST, ATTRACTIVENESS, EXPERTISE AND FAMILIARITY ON PURCHASE INTENTION

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Abstract

Information explosion and media play a major role in changing perception of consumer. The celebrities marketing has been used for a wide variety of brands. This study focused on analysing the influences of celebrity's characteristics on purchase intention of cosmetics products in the Sri Lankan context and this study makes an important contribution to fill the existing gap in the literature and examining the relationship and level of influences between trustworthiness of celebrity, attractiveness, expertise and familiarity of celebrities, and consumer's purchase intention. The finding shows that the above variables individually have high level attributes and positively significant linear relationship between celebrity's characteristics and consumer's purchase intention.

Keywords: celebrity marketing, purchase intention, celebrity endorsement

1. Introduction

Organizations are trend to introduce innovative products to meet the trends, lifestyles and expectations of customers to compete in a turbulent and competitive business landscape. The celebrity marketing is a tactic featuring a famous person to offer an endorsement of a product. Celebrity marketing has been used across all mediums. Print, television, radio, film and various forms of new media have all been effective outlets for celebrity endorsed products. The key is to match the right celebrity with the right product and place them both in the right advertisement campaign. If the combination is done well, it can lead to huge profits and an immediate change in the public perception of a product. Marketing communications that employ celebrity endorsers, can be characterized as a process in which the sender conveys stimuli to influence the behavior of others. The instrument of celebrity endorsement has nowadays become a pervasive element in marketing.

Many marketers consider that use of the celebrity endorsement enhances the product evaluations and also increases the advertisement ratings (Dean and Biswas, 2001). Marketers motivate consumers to purchase products based on the reputation of the celebrity endorser, and transfer the image of that celebrity to the product being endorsed. Essential objective of celebrity endorsement is to achieve a favorable impact on brand image. So, it is very important to grab consumers' attention and interest among those similar advertisements by using a celebrity who has unique characteristics that can truly arouse consumers' purchase intention (Wang et al., 2012; Amos et al., 2008).

Considering the importance of celebrity marketing and influences of celebrity's characteristics on purchase intention. Hence, this study attempted to investigate empirically on the influence of celebrity's characteristics on purchase intention in the Sri Lankan context.

Purchase intention

Purchase intention refers as the behavior of a consumer to a future purchase decision for a particular good or service (Hodza, *et al.*, 2012). Usually purchase intention is related with consumers' behavior, perception and their attitude. According to Wang *et al.*, (2012) celebrity marketing and advertising appeal positively influence the purchase Intention. Furthermore, consumers' purchase intention was easily affected by many external factors during their decision processes. For instance, in the processes of information search, they were easily affected by word-of-mouth communication. Since consumers' purchase intentions and arousal were easily triggered by the promotion strategies, their attitude towards the promoted product, service or brand was also easily affected by the popularity and image of the celebrity. Especially when the consumers treated the celebrities as reference group, they wanted to imitate them in an effort to feel successful too (Chaniotakis *et al.*, 2010). As a result, consumers' purchase intention would positively influence by their admired celebrities. Based on the literature survey the following dimensions were identified to measure the purchase intension; perceived price, packaging, advertisement, perceived quality, perceived risk, perceived value, trust on the product, familiarity, perceived economic situation (Chaniotakis *et al.*, 2010).

Trustworthiness and purchase intention

Trustworthiness refers to "*the honesty, integrity and believability of an endorser*" (Erdogan *et al.*, 2001). Companies try to find endorsers who are widely seen as trustful and who are seen as honest, believable and dependable. The trustworthiness is a major importance for effective endorsers. If consumers believe what the endorser is telling and they trust him or her, the believability of the advertisement is higher and attitude of the consumers will increase (Erdogan *et al.*, 2001). Although celebrities were usually viewed as highly credible and trustworthy, if the celebrities who had already endorsed several kinds of products would be viewed as less credible and trustworthy than those who had endorsed only one product. According to Al Zobi at al., (2011) investigation the way source trustworthiness affected the persuadable communication and they found that, when the communicator was perceived as highly trustworthy, the opinionated message was considered as more effective in producing attitude change. Trustworthiness was measured using the dimensions of dependability, honesty and reliability (Erdogan *et al.*, 2001; Al Zobi at al., (2011). Therefore, the hypothesis H1 is higher the trustworthiness of celebrity endorsers the higher the purchase intention.

Attractiveness and purchase intention

Attractiveness was something that could arouse the interest of most people. The concept of attractiveness does not only entail the physical attractiveness. Attractiveness also entails concepts such as intellectual skills, personality properties, way of living, athletic performances and skills of endorsers (Chaniotakis *et al.*, 2010). Physically attractive celebrities were an important predictor of advertising effectiveness. Attractiveness was measured through beautifulness, good looking and classy elegant (Chaniotakis *et al.*, 2010). The hypothesis H2 is higher the attractiveness of celebrity endorsers the higher the purchase intention.

Expertise and purchase intention

The celebrity endorsement is being defined as “*the extent to which an endorser is perceived to be a source of valid assertions*” (Erdogan et al., 2001). Expert sources also influence perceptions of the product’s quality. The source or celebrity that is a specialist has been found to be more persuasive and generates more purchase intentions. The level of celebrity expertise will determine its effectiveness (Amos et al., 2008). As a result, the consumers could be better induced by the endorsers and buy the products. Therefore, the level of perceived celebrity expertise could be used to predict the effectiveness of celebrity endorser. The expertise was measured using the dimensions of experience, knowledge, skills and qualification (Amos et al., 2008). The hypothesis H3 is higher the expertise of celebrity endorsers the higher the purchase intention.

Familiarity and purchase intention

Familiarity is the supposed resemblance as knowledge that a celebrity endorser possesses through exposure (Belch and Belch 2001). When companies choose a celebrity, it is important to what extent consumers are familiar with the celebrity. The more familiar the consumer is with the celebrity, the more positive intention. It is also well-known that consumers, who are more familiar with a celebrity and are more exposed to a celebrity, automatically like a celebrity more. The effect of familiarity on attitude increases when there are brief exposures of the celebrity. The familiarity was measured using the dimensions of recognition, popularity and acceptance (Belch and Belch 2001). The hypothesis H4 is higher the familiarity of celebrity endorsers the higher the purchase intention.

2. Methodology

Quantitative nature of this study collected primary data through questionnaire using 5-point Likert scale from consumers of cosmetics confined to a particular district in Sri Lanka. 410 responses were received and from which 390 qualified for further analysis. Data analyzed using SPSS 22.0 and performed the statistical analysis to measure the magnitude and direction of the relationship between influences of celebrity’s characteristics on purchase intention.

The overall reliability for the collected data was 0.845, where Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient is more than or equal to 0.8 all items considered to be reliable. The demographic information depicts that out of 390 respondents 92% were female and remaining 8% represents male. The highest percentage of 42% that indicated the age group of 36-45 and 31% was private sector employees.

3. Data analysis and findings

The celebrity’s characteristics includes four variables which are trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, and familiarity. The results show that the high level of influence of celebrity on the purchase intention. The mean value of these variables is 3.8948, 4.5237, 4.0262 and 4.3931 respectively. In addition, most of the respondents have expressed the common opinion toward the celebrity characteristics. This was depicted by the Standard Deviation of these variables 0.4174, 0.4389, 0.4186 and 0.4179 respectively.

The correlation analysis indicated that among the independent variables, trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise and familiarity are positively correlated with purchase intention ($r > 0.3$). It also shows a moderate positive influence of celebrity endorsement on the purchase intention.

The correlation matrix between each variable show that each interaction of variable between independent and dependent variable with the significant level of 0.01. This indicates that the correlation was significant and relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention are linearly correlated. The correlation matrix explained a positive relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention ($r = 0.353^{**}$), between attractiveness and purchase intention ($r = 0.390^{**}$), between expertise and purchase intention ($r = 0.466^{**}$) and between familiarity and purchase intention ($r = 0.492^{**}$).

The regression analysis shows that the coefficient of trustworthiness was 0.076 (X1) which represents the partial effect of trustworthiness on purchase intention, keeping attractiveness, expertise and familiarity as constant. The estimated positive sign implies that such an effect is positive, with the purchase intention increasing by 0.076 for every unit increase in trustworthiness and that this coefficient value is significant at the 1% level. Similarly, the coefficient of attractiveness was -0.24 (X2), expertise 0.117 (X3) and familiarity 0.190 (X4). The model indicates that about (Adjusted R²) 28.4% variation of purchase intention can be explained by celebrity endorsement.

The multiple regression equation is; $Y = 2.800 + 0.076X_1 + (-.024X_2) + 0.117X_3 + 0.190X_4$

The hypothesis (H1) on the trustworthiness of celebrities was accepted (p – value is lesser than the α value, $0.018 < 0.05$), hence, trustworthiness has much influence on purchase intention. H2 was rejected (p-value is more than the α , $0.518 > 0.05$), hence, attractiveness of celebrity has no significant contribution to consumer's purchase intention. H3 was accepted (p-value is less than the α , $0.002 < 0.05$), hence, expertise of celebrity has much influence on purchase intention and H4 was accepted (p-value is less than the α , $0.000 < 0.05$), hence, familiarity of celebrity shows much influence on purchase intention.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the study it can be concluded that a characteristic (trustworthy, attractiveness, expertise and familiarity) of celebrity more positively influences on purchase intentions towards cosmetics products. Therefore, marketers can specifically focus on the celebrities who possess these qualities are more persuasive and are more capable of positively influencing intentions to purchase cosmetics products. The findings were par with the previous studies as indicated by Wang et al., (2012); Forbes, (2011); Amos et al., (2008); Erdogan *et al.*, (2001); Miller and Heart (1969); Belch and Belch (2001) and the characteristic of celebrity and their endorsement was very useful, which help to gain sales, increase brand awareness, create positive feelings towards the brand, entertain the customers, recall the brand value as well as create and increase purchase intension.

Celebrity marketing is one of the most preferred strategic tools of marketing in Sri Lanka. It has become a trend and perceived as a winning formula for marketing and brand building. However, this research has focused only on purchase intention so the researcher would like to suggest that future study should be carried out to analyse the role of celebrity endorsement on other factors such as brand equity, buying behaviour, consumer's attitude, impulsive buying behaviour. Furthermore, studies can be carried out between two competitive companies in an industry to compare the effectiveness of the celebrity marketing.

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