



EXPLORING ATTITUDINAL SHIFT THROUGH CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT USING ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL

Dr Ritika Jain

Senior Faculty I-Nurture Education Solutions

ABSTRACT

Everyday consumers encounter numerous advertisements with different convincing appeals. Persuasion and attitude are central focus to consumer psychology. Celebrity endorsements help companies to position in unique ways and receive attention in market clutter which may engender positive impact on attitude targeting sales figure. Presentation of information to consumer leads to some form of elaboration which results in some evaluation leading to remembrance or acceptance or rejection of a message. Many people may experience high or low elaboration when they encounter persuasive message. Elaboration Likelihood Model attempts to explain how attitudes are formed, shaped and reinforced by persuasive communication. Today's marketing environment is inundated with products and services with lot choices and variations resulting in consumer bargaining power. Buying is a routine affair for most of the consumers and tough competition have made consumers the king of the market. In routine buying or low-involvement product, not much effort, time or thought process takes into place but for complex or high involvement product, much thought process ensues. Celebrity endorsement which is traditionally considered to be a peripheral cue of persuasion can also play a significant role in central route of persuasion leading to attitudinal shift for sales generation. This paper explores attitudinal shift through celebrity endorsement with help of Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion.

KEYWORDS : Elaboration Likelihood Model, Celebrity Endorsement, Attitude, Persuasion

1. Introduction

In highly competitive world, marketers are always keen in understanding consumer insights influencing consumer behavioural patterns. Product innovation and diversification have led to the emergence of innovative ways to promote the products. Using Celebrity, is one such important way of persuasion. Expertise, trustworthiness, credibility charisma, preferability, familiarity, fit congruence, similarity factors are explored much in terms of endorsements. Companies use celebrities to generate positive effect on consumer's attitude towards a brand. Traditionally, celebrity endorsement has been perceived only as a peripheral cue of persuasion.

2. Celebrity Endorsement

Friedman and Friedman (1979) states that celebrity is an individual known by the public for his achievements and by endorsements he acts as spokesperson of the brand. Patra and Datta (2012) proclaims that a celebrity is a person who is successful in his own profession with huge fan following and media attention. They have demographic and psychographic connection with the target audiences. According to McCracken (1989), celebrity endorsement may be useful as it makes an advertisement stand out in the market (Dean & Biswas, 2001). Studies have revealed that celebrity endorsers can have a more positive impact on buying intention of consumers than non-celebrities (Byrne, Whitehead & Breen, 2003). According to Elberse and Verleun (2012), celebrity endorsement can increase the sales by an average of 4% during endorsement period and the great achievement done by the celebrity during that period can boost the sales more. Celebrities can create attention and bring prestige to the brands and may encourage higher recall (Erdogan, 1999; Tom 1992).

3. Elaboration Likelihood Model

Consumers attitude and behaviour can be altered by the advertisement appeals and the level of involvement in persuasive communication. The different models like transfer model, source credibility model, source attractiveness model, associative memory network model and elaboration likelihood model are available to explain the necessary attributes which a celebrity endorser should possess for successful endorsement of a brand.

Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion is the degree to which the recipient of a message is involved with the message processing that influence the effect of advertisement attitude on his brand judgement. High level of involvement shows high level of elaboration likelihood and may serve as an evidence for the allocation of cognitive resources to the persuasive appeal where as

low level of involvement show low level of elaboration likelihood and recipients are not motivated to elaborate the information they are provided with. Variables like motivation and ability of consumers decide whether the elaboration likelihood is high or low. ELM depicts that there are two paths to persuasion namely the central path or central route of persuasion and the peripheral path or peripheral route of persuasion.

ELM is a two- way model of response to advertising stimuli. It explains how attitudes are formed and changed on the basis of the level of involvement. The central path is most appropriately used when the receiver is motivated and able to think about the message and access the message with minimum distraction. Central route involves high level of elaboration and the recipient scans the contents of the message because of a high motivation level. Strong arguments and credible sources are influential in such route. If message is vague, ambiguous or receiver is unable or unmotivated to receive the message then peripheral cue occurs. Peripheral route involves a low level of elaboration as the user is not scrutinizing the message for its effectiveness. Cues which are not immediately relevant for the message are influential in such routes. A significant objective of such influence is attitude change. Consumer receptivity to messages aimed at altering their beliefs will tend to vary a great deal depending on the nature of the product.

4. Research Framework

This paper reconnoitres the perception of consumers towards celebrity endorsements in preliminary research and then explore attitudinal shift through celebrity endorsement with help of Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion to grasp how endorsements work to persuade target consumers to shift their attitudes in a direction reflecting positive buying behaviours. It will also highlight the routes of persuasion (central or peripheral) for celebrity endorsements which can play a significant role in delivering strong and quality arguments or information when the product and celebrity congruence exists.

The primary data was collected through questionnaire. The sample of 200 respondents varied in terms of occupation, gender, age and income to make it more representative. Preliminary research revealed that apart from price, concept of celebrity endorsement plays an important and influential role in buying behaviour. 80% of respondents favoured celebrity endorsement as an effective tool of persuasion and 73% revealed that they prefer their favourite celebrities endorsing their brands and 79% stated that celebrity gender has no impact on endorsement but it is more related to product category. 55% of respondents felt that the brand endorsed

is not used by celebrity himself and 58% revealed that celebrity association with particular brand helped them to remember a product. 89% felt that brand and celebrity should have some congruence between them. 68 % of respondents stated that sometimes celebrity overshadow the brands and multiple endorsements should not be done by celebrity as it causes chaos in the consumer's mind. After analysing the data, it is revealed that celebrity endorsement concept still works with today's knowledgeable consumers who is totally aware of the endorsement business. In spite of knowing the pitfalls of endorsements, people do trail the words and actions of luminaries. Celebrity association certainly assists to recall a particular brand.

In research extension, six products were explored: clothes, car, laptop, watch, shampoo, LCD. It was assumed that central route is effective for high involvement products like laptop, car, LCD and peripheral route works for low involvement products like shampoo, watch, clothes. After analysis, it was found that celebrity endorsement which was considered to be peripheral route proved to be central route of persuasion for high end products. 68% believed that high end products can be purchased by celebrity influence and persuasion. Further evaluation revealed that endorsement by celebrity can be central route for laptop and LCD and even for car for some respondents. It shows that consumers of high end products are not always looking for strong and quality arguments but sometimes follows the words of their preferable celebrities. 59% of respondents revealed that if high end products are associated with their preferred celebrity they may surely attend to his persuasion. Reasons that can be attributed for change in the traditional game of persuasion is the rising income of the family and increasing standard of living. This tech- savvy and aspiring generation gives more weightage to materialistic world incorporating glamour influence, ego and show-off business.

5. Suggestions for Corporate Strategy Formulation

ELM provides a useful framework for understanding the effectiveness of persuasive communication and it can be anecdotal that attitude change may occur through the routes of influence. This influence can create the trust in consumer or make the consumer skeptical to persuasion. Using ELM, endorsers can influence advertising persuasiveness through central cues or peripheral cues. If recipient is motivated and able to process persuasive communication then cognitive processing can result in favourable thoughts, unfavourable thoughts or neutrality leading to enduring positive attitude change or enduring negative attitude change. Whether an impression is positive or negative, central route (strong argument by celebrity, perfect congruence between celebrity and brand) for attitude change can be used for high involvement products also. If recipient is not motivated and able to process persuasive communication, then peripheral cue (attractive or expert celebrity or number of arguments by celebrity) is present which may lead to attitude shift.

Celebrity endorsement can affect consumer attitude for both low-involvement products and to some extent for high-involvement products also for this generation. If product is low involvement (peripheral route), then celebrity endorsements is more likely to be effective. If product is high involvement (central route) and endorser is congruent with product endorsed than also celebrity endorsements is effective. By highlighting celebrity endorsement through central route, shift of attitude can be done but marketers must spend considerable time on Q-score of celebrity in terms of credibility, believability, popularity, familiarly and likeability. Q-score is calculated by taking the percentage of respondents who indicate that a celebrity is one of my favourite ones and dividing that number by the percentage of respondents who indicate that they heard of that celebrity.

They should also research about congruence of brand and celebrity fit and how to use celebrity endorsements as central route of persuasion. If, in any case, celebrity personality and characters does not match product image then combination of several celebrities

with differentiated characters can be used to improve the consistency degree and level of persuasion. Utmost care must be taken that celebrity don't overshadow the brands and must not go for multiple endorsements especially in case of high-end purchase which may cause clutter in consumer mind resulting in negative attitudinal shift. If celebrity power strongly present arguments with convincing appeal then more persuasion can be done because this young generation in spite of knowing the backdrop of celebrity usage do tend to attend persuasion by their aspirational idols.

The marketers utilizing endorsements through central route must work for greater persistence, resistance to counter attack, fading, brand memory, usage intention, elaboration, attitude accessibility, attitude confidence, attitude - behaviour consistency. For peripheral route, attitudes can be retained or regained by exploring the concepts of reciprocity, consistency, scarcity, conformity, celebrity prestige, celebrity credibility, celebrity experience, identification, charismatic style, tangible appeal and emotional arousal. Marketers have lot of scope to encash endorsement concepts. With changing demographics, aspirations, fluctuating mind states and influence of glamour world on this Gen X, marketers can experiment a lot. This is need of hour as there is too persuasion all around with influx of brands in daily routine

6. Conclusion

ELM routes can serve multiple role in a persuasive setting depending on other relative factors. Celebrity endorsement is also used since many years. Establishing a linkage between the two can great a new impact with power packed strategies. Signing up stars for endorsements is a time-tested strategy and has been effectively used by some of the top brands. Celebrities are always considered to be influential endorsers because of the presence of their alliance with symbolic desirable reference group. The effectiveness of the celebrity endorsement is present because of its ability to tap into the consumer's symbolic union with its aspirational reference group. Even though the celebrity is not seen as an expert in the endorsed product, they still have a positive impact as long as they are experts in their own field. Expertise and trustworthiness in the celebrity endorser gives the brand a sense of believability and credibility. An appropriately used celebrity can prove to be a massively powerful tool that magnifies the effects of a campaign. But the aura of cautiousness should always be there. The fact to be emphasized is that celebrities alone do not guarantee success, as consumers nowadays understand advertising. People recognize that celebrities are being paid a lot of money for endorsements and this knowledge makes them to think twice about celebrity endorsements. ELM can provide simplified and organized framework that may be applied to many sources, message, recipient and context variables so, smart moves with proper strategies for endorsement can change the traditional game for marketers. Unfortunately, the ELM does not account for all people all the time.

References

1. Belch & Belch, 2001, Advertising and promotion: An integrated marketing communication perspective, 5th edition, Boston: Irwin McGraw-Hill.
2. Benoit & Benoit, 2008, Persuasive messages: The process of influence, Blackwell Publishing.
3. Byrne, Whitehead & Breen S., 2003, The naked truth of celebrity endorsement, British Food Journal, 105(4/5), 288-296.
4. Dean & Biswas, 2001, Third-party organization endorsement of products: An advertising cue affecting consumer pre-purchase evaluation of goods and services, Journal of Advertising, Vol. 30 No. 4, pp. 41-57.
5. Elberse & Verleun, 2012, The Economic Value of Celebrity Endorsements, Journal of Advertising Research, 52(2), 149-165.
6. Erdogan, 1999, Celebrity endorsement: A literature review, Journal of Marketing Management, 15, 291-314.
7. Friedman & Friedman, 1979, Endorser effectiveness by product type, Journal of Advertising Research, 19(5), 63-71.
8. McCracken, 1989, Who is the Celebrity Endorser? Cultural Foundations of the Endorsement Process, Journal of Consumer Research, 16(3), 310.
9. Patra & Datta 2012, Celebrity selection and role of celebrities in creating brand awareness and brand preference: A Literature Review, Journal of Marketing and Communication, 8, 48-57.
10. Petty, Cacioppo & Schumann, 1983, Central and Peripheral Routes to Advertising Effectiveness: The Moderating Role of Involvement, Journal of Consumer Research, 10(2), 135.
11. Sher, Peter, and Lee, 2009, Consumer Scepticism and Online Reviews: An Elaboration Likelihood Model Perspective, Social Behaviour & Personality, 137-44.