

CMNS 221

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Final Paper

Thesis- Endorsements by celebrities and influencers exert a profound influence on consumer behaviour and digital-age advertising practices. This paper seeks to enhance our understanding of the dynamic shifts within consumer culture, emphasising the pivotal role of social media advertisements in shaping these changes.

The landscape of advertising has gone through a significant change over the past few years. Current times are dominated by social media which in turn is filled with celebrities and influencers endorsing new products and brands. Advertisers typically obtain celebrity endorsements to convey messages about the brand since it is believed that the messages from celebrities will affect customers' perception, recall, and retention of brands, brand image, and buy intention (Ahmad et al., 2019). This paper talks about celebrity endorsements and their impact on consumer culture and how they have changed over the past few years.

One may ask, what roles do celebrities play in consumer culture? Celebrities have always had a great influence on people, their actions influence the actions of the public. Using celebrities to endorse their products/services is something that brands have been doing for many years. According to Kantar, celebrities appear in 16% of global advertisements and more than half of Japanese advertisements because celebrities draw attention to the brand, attracting more attention to advertising (Yakob and Steals, 2022). Celebrity endorsements in advertising frequently result in increased brand visibility and customer engagement. Their connection to a product or service adds credibility and reliability, impacting consumer views and purchasing decisions. The symbiotic link between celebrities and brands produces a potent marketing channel, allowing businesses to reach a wider audience and form stronger connections with customers.

It is said that 'all publicity is good publicity', this statement holds very true in the case of celebrity advertisements. To back my argument, an online experiment with 260 target-relevant female consumers was undertaken, in which the sort of celebrity endorsement was manipulated. When a naturally controversial celebrity endorses a brand with a reinforcement strategy and an incidentally controversial celebrity endorses a brand with a

revitalisation strategy, consumer attitudes toward the luxury fashion brand are generally more positive (Carlliet et al., 2019). The study concluded that brands can leverage controversial celebrities if they complement what the brand wants to show about itself, and when people realise the pairing is intentional, it helps the brand be perceived in a better light, especially in the realm of luxury fashion, where being a little controversial can sometimes be a good thing (Carlliet et al., 2019).

Lately, advertising methods have seen a shift from mainstream advertisements and the focus has shifted more towards social media advertisements. We all know that celebrities have been utilised as brand ambassadors, spokespersons, or representatives as a strong communication tool for marketers to engage with their customers. Celebrity endorsements have been prominent in print and television advertisements (Ahmad et al., 2019). Celebrity endorsements on social media commercials have become more common as old advertising methods have given way to modern ones such as social media advertising (Ahmad et al., 2019). Celebrity endorsements are often employed in social media advertisements in the digital era to improve brand image and buy intent of a specific product or service; endorsements can occur when celebrities provide professional advice, act as a spokesman for a product, or are associated with a product (McCracken, 1989; Seno & Lukas, 2007, as cited in Ahmad et al., 2019).

Engagements with celebrities were once rare and strictly regulated, with the primary objective of publicity and marketing. However, the advent of social media has changed this dynamic, transforming it from a unidirectional to a more engaging and mutually beneficial one. Celebrities are more active on social media platforms, sharing personal details of their lives with their followers. As a result, audiences can track their favourite celebrities around

the clock, obtaining unparalleled access to their personal lives and creating a closer, more intimate bond with them (Chung and Chao, 2017).

It is now safe to say that social media advertising has taken over traditional advertising. Offline promotional strategies such as direct mail, print commercials, broadcast media, telemarketing, window displays, and billboards are examples of traditional marketing. Despite predating the Internet, it has a large following and has the potential to reach a large audience. Although both techniques strive to get items and services in front of individuals who would buy or use them, the goal is approached differently in each case (bannerflow, nd). Traditional advertising, while useful in reaching a large audience and increasing brand recognition, frequently lacks the potential to reach a worldwide audience or target specific groups. Its audience is fairly arbitrary. The attractiveness of social media advertising, on the other hand, stems from its speed. Traditional techniques are sometimes strict, requiring long-term commitments and static messaging. Once released, there is little room for change. Digital advertising, on the other hand, provides responsiveness and versatility. It enables quick responses to current events or trends. With the correct tools, concepts can be quickly produced and translated into live ads, providing a level of agility far superior to traditional advertising (bannerflow, nd).

According to Trentaman, consumer identities are the various personas and roles that people adopt in society as consumers (Trentaman, 2007). These identities can be shaped by social, cultural, and economic circumstances, as well as by political ideas and practices (Trentaman, 2007). The rise of neoliberalism, along with the advent of new social movements, has resulted in a noticeable change in consumer perspective from passive to active players in societal dynamics. Notably, in the modern context, celebrities and

influencers exert enormous power in moulding consumer behaviour and modern advertising strategies, particularly in the digital age. These public figures are seen as judges of cultural trends and values, and their endorsements have a substantial impact on consumer preferences and purchasing decisions. Consumers frequently see these celebrities as role models and are motivated to follow their choices and their recommendations, conferring significant impact on the populace's purchase patterns and brand affinities (Trentaman, 2007).

To summarise, this suggests that celebrity endorsements sometimes go beyond the relationship between the celebrity and the brand. For instance, according to, Salvation and Adzharuddin the purchasing intentions of young consumers for L'Oreal skin-care products are highly influenced by celebrity endorsement and celebrity traits. Through qualitative analysis and consumer surveys, the purchasing intentions of young consumers for L'Oreal skin-care products are highly influenced by celebrity endorsement and celebrity traits. This is because when L'Oreal promotes a celebrity who has the necessary abilities and experience with the promoted product, it increases the likelihood of people responding positively to the commercial and purchasing the product (Salvation and Adzharuddin, 2020).

It is often assumed that not everything seen on the internet is genuine. Such is the situation with social media; not everything posted on social media is genuine; many people build fictional lifestyles to demonstrate to the world how happy they are. While social media advertising is an excellent tool to reach a wider audience, it is also true that many people question what they see on social media and find it difficult to accept. Similar may be said about celebrities; celebrities put their best foot forward to show that they have the most magnificent lives; but, because of the increased understanding about the authenticity of social media, the target audience may find it difficult to believe a celebrity. For example, if a

celebrity endorses a moisturiser in a post, it can be difficult to believe that the celebrity truly uses the moisturiser on a daily basis as an element of their daily routine? Millie Bobby Brown, a prominent actress, shared a video of herself filming her evening skin care routine with items from her own brand, Florence by mills. However, it was evident from the video that she was not utilising the products; several people pointed out that she was still wearing makeup after completing her skincare process (McNeal, 2019). Such incidents call into question the veracity of celebrity endorsements. Furthermore, celebrity endorsements do not work when the brand does not select the appropriate celebrity for themselves.

Celebrities, for example, can be quite controversial at times, which can cause the brand image to change and even put them in the bad spotlight. When a celebrity is in the news for the wrong reasons, it reflects poorly on the brand. During larger-scale controversies, consumers tend to boycott the brands with which the celebrity is associated with. Tiger Woods was a prime example of this in 2009, when suspicions of his infidelity surfaced and firms began to drop him as a sponsor to avoid customer backlash. Nike did not immediately discontinue his sponsorship, and as a result, they lost clients (Kraft, 2018).

Just the way we saw a shift from traditional advertising to social media advertisement, there are also other new methods for instance, user-generated content or UGC. The use of UGC into marketing initiatives, particularly those featuring celebrities or influencers, represents a watershed moment in consumer culture and advertising methods in the digital age. When marketers encourage users to create content about their products by collaborating with celebrities or influencers, the impact of celebrity endorsements is amplified. This collaborative approach promotes the notion that consumer behaviour is changed not only by

traditional top-down advertising but also by interactions and engagements made possible by these endorsements.

The shift from traditional advertisements to social media advertisements is driven by the rise of technology. Without a doubt, technological advancements have significantly altered how people consume media and, as a result, how advertisers engage with their target audiences. The spread of numerous digital platforms and technological breakthroughs has resulted in a dramatic shift in media consumption patterns. The diversity of platforms for content consumption has grown dramatically over the previous decade, providing customers with multiple options such as websites, social media, video platforms, on-demand television, and audio services. This expansion has coincided with changes in daily media consumption habits, indicating adjustments in how individuals interact with various channels. Print newspapers, for example, have seen a significant fall in daily consumption of roughly 34% as readership has declined. Traditional television viewing has also dropped by 10%. Out-of-home (OOH) and cinema advertising, conversely, have maintained reasonably steady levels of engagement during this time period. These variations in media consumption habits demonstrate the dynamic changes that are taking place in how people access and engage with various forms of media.

In summary, the advertising domain has substantially transformed in recent times due to the widespread influence of social media. This shift has significantly impacted consumer behaviour and brand promotion strategies. Celebrity endorsements have held a prominent role in advertising and have determined how consumers perceive and purchase products. Extensive research and industry observations have consistently highlighted the notable effects

of associating celebrities with brands, enhancing brand visibility, credibility, and audience engagement.

Traditional advertising outlets such as print and television have gradually given way to the vast world of social media. This transformation has modified how brands communicate with their target audiences. Brands now stress adaptability and tailor messages to specific demographic groups. Social media platforms have altered the relationship between celebrities and their fans by providing unparalleled insights into the personal lives of these public figures, which ultimately fosters deeper connections.

However, the transition to social media advertising has been filled with difficulties and complexity. While it has a greater reach and adaptability than traditional approaches, there is growing negativity about its authenticity among audiences. Idealised depictions and potential disparities between a celebrity's endorsement and the actual product might sow seeds of doubt among buyers. The impact of celebrity endorsements depends on several elements, including the alignment between a celebrity's image and the brand and any controversies surrounding the figure. Cases like the Tiger Woods infidelity scandal in which a celebrity is entangled in negative publicity can dramatically affect a brand's reputation and lead to customer backlash.

Using user-generated content (UGC) in marketing plans, especially when working with celebrities or influences, significantly improves advertising approaches. This collaborative approach emphasises that consumer behaviour is not only shaped by conventional top-down advertising but also by the engagements facilitated by these endorsements. Technological breakthroughs have driven this drastic shift in advertising

strategies. The development of digital platforms and technical breakthroughs has profoundly changed how people consume information by forcing advertisers to rethink how they engage with their target audiences. The variety of content platforms indicates shifting media consumption patterns, which indicates the dynamic changes in audience preferences and behaviours.

To conclude, the advertising environment has undergone notable changes due to the emergence of social media. Celebrity endorsements continue to impact consumer culture and purchase decisions significantly. However, the shift to digital advertising brings both new possibilities and problems, requiring companies to handle authenticity issues while adapting to the changing interactions between celebrities, brands, and viewers. As technology advances and customer tastes shift, the future of advertising will likely see more innovation and adaptation to effectively engage and hold consumer attention in an ever-changing and linked world.

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