
INFLUENCES OF CHILD ENDORSERS ON THE CONSUMERS

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ABSTRACT

Today, the use of celebrities as a part of marketing communication strategy is fairly common practice for the major firms in supporting corporate or brand imagery. The usage of celebrities either adult or child by the Indian advertising agencies has experienced a phenomenal increase in the last five years. Effective communication between the marketer and the consumers is the need of the hour and celebrity endorsement is a strategy that is perceived as making full use of this opportunity. Most of the countries have adopted this strategy as an effective marketing tool and even India is carving out space for itself in this arena.

This study aims to analyze the level of influences created on the consumers by child endorsers through commercials. The empirical findings of the study claims that majority of the sample though did not support the ads endorsed by the children or child celebrity, they are well aware of the about its positive and negative impact on the consumers. The sample population has said that child endorser has certain qualities like intense interests, very observant and extremely curious to learn new/innovativeness. Sample television viewers' have appropriated to the weightage messages that are passed through child models by the marketer, they have also acknowledged the fact that child celebrity endorsement enhances the buyer's belief and they are satisfied in their buying process.

Key Words: Brand imagery, Child Endorsers, Advertising agencies, Commercial ads.

INTRODUCTION

Today, the use of celebrities as part of marketing communication strategy is fairly common practice for the major firms in supporting corporate or brand imagery. Companies invest large sums of money to align their brands and themselves with endorsers. Such endorsers are seen as dynamic with both attractive and likeable qualities and companies plan that these qualities are transferred to product via promotional activities. Furthermore, because of their fame, celebrities serve not only to create and maintain attention but also to achieve high recall rates for ad messages in today's highly cluttered environments. Especially when advertisement or commercial ads are endorsed by kids their influences on consumers are more, as they are attracted by their innocents/smart intelligent behaviors.

The usage of celebrities either adult or child by the Indian advertising agencies has experienced a phenomenal increase in the last five years. Effective communication between the marketer and the consumers is the need of the hour and celebrity endorsement is a strategy that is perceived as making full use of this opportunity. Most of the countries have adopted this strategy as an effective marketing tool and even India is carving out space for itself in this arena. It can be rightly stated that celebrities have been quite successful in India in communicating right messages and influencing their purchasing behavior. Thus, celebrity endorsements in India have produced positive impact on consumers buying behavior by increasing public attention and sales volume of the endorsed brands.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

India as a country is known for loving its stars. The Indians idolize their Bollywood, television actors and cricketers. The advertisers see this as an opportunity to grab and work on so as to expand their operations and promote their product. In India today, the use of celebrity advertising for companies has become a trend and it has been perceived as a winning formula of corporate image building and product marketing. Associating a brand with a top-notch celebrity can do more than perk up brand recall. It can create linkages with the stars appeal, thereby adding refreshing and new dimensions to the brand image. The influences of the celebrity image and its effect on the consumer buying behaviour have been a researchable issue for quite some time. Based on the prevailing market research potential in this subject context, the researcher decided to pursue this study. This study aims to analyse the level of influences created on the consumers by the child endorsers through commercials.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brief discussion of past literature work has been presented in this section of the study:

According to Katyal (2007)¹⁹ marketers spend enormous amounts of money annually on celebrity endorsement contracts based on the belief that celebrities are effective spokespeople for their products or brands. All in all, the positive or negative impact of celebrities on the brand is open for further pondering. Pedhiwal G. L. (2011)²¹ says that today 'Celebrity Endorsement' has become a trend and perceptible as a winning formula for product marketing and brand building. It has been established as one of the trendiest tools of promotion in recent time.

LalithaBalakrishnan and C.Shalini Kumar (2011)²² have said that in the present era of information explosion and media influence, these advertisements play a major role in changing the settled perception or thinking, which is otherwise called attitude, of the consumer and also the consumption pattern of the society in general. Across the world, celebrities have been used for a wide variety of brands. The crescendo of celebrities endorsing brands has been steadily increasing over the past years. Marketers overtly acknowledge the power of celebrities in influencing consumer –purchase decisions. This study focuses on identifying the influence of celebrity endorsements on the purchase attitude of the consumers. It is a ubiquitously accepted fact that celebrity endorsement can bestow special attributes upon a product or service that it may have lacked otherwise.

Giridhar K.V (2012)²⁴ empirical research work aimed to study the effects of celebrity endorsement on consumer buying behavior in Indian context and to examine awareness, appeal and relevance in setting up of the promotional strategies as well as to test the celebrity impact on consumers. The study found that celebrity endorsement enhances product information and creates awareness among consumers. It helps them to recall the brands of the endorsed products. The consumers of durable products have their motivational sources from need and product utility. The study revealed that the celebrities convincing endorsement motivates them to materialize the purchase of durables.

AnnaduraiPughazhendi and SudharaniRavindran D. (2012)²⁵ study aimed to identify the influence of celebrity endorsement on consumer buying behaviour. The result of the study found that brand name and celebrity endorser are the two key factors that play an important role in affecting purchase intention. Majority of the people want to see their favorite celebrity endorsing their brands.

From the detailed literature review it has been understood that no researcher work is yet carried in the past about the impact of children /kids' endorsement on consumer buying behaviour, the same has been identified as the researcher gap.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objectives of the study are:

- To analyse the natures of impact created by the advertisements on the purchasing behaviour of consumers.
- To measure the consumers' level of perception towards products advertisements endorsement by child celebrity.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

Ho: There exists significant association between products endorsed by the kids and its influences of the buying behaviour.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study is both explorative and descriptive in nature. Coimbatore city is selected as the area of the study. The study adopted multi-stage sampling technique. In the first phase of the research work, the identification of study area and selection of geographical zone for primary data collection was executive based on the cluster base stratified random

sampling techniques. In the second phase, the researcher adopted convenience /non-probability sampling techniques, where the sample subjects are selected based on the referral groups references. The current study considers TV commercial viewers are considered as the sample population.

Based on the city municipality data base, it has inferred that the Coimbatore city has nearer to 3,54,715 households. For effective public administration, the city is divided into 100 wards, consisting of 20 in each zone of East, West, central North and South. A sample of twenty percent (20 percent) was chosen for filed survey. The samples of twenty wards were grouped as five from each zone. Accurate data on the population distribution of its citizen on family-life style pattern is not available. A convenient judgmental sampling technique was adhered for conduct of descriptive research work in the stage II of the study. Thus, from each ward, two streets were chosen as the research population and from each street 50 households were selected as the sample population, i.e., the voluntary respondents who were ready to participate in the interview process i.e., from each categories of family-life style pattern. In total twenty households were surveyed from each wards in the five zones, that is 100 population in each zone and in total 400 households. The sample subjects were approached based on the information collected from the friends, relative, colleagues and other references groups. At the end of the survey, it was found that nearly 20 interview schedules did not supplied enough data required for the study, thus twenty schedules were rejected and the samples size of the study was restricted to 380 sample subjects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Marketers use a variety of techniques to attract audiences to increase product purchases. Child endorsement to promote product sales is one such technique. In reality customers' perception about the ads endorsed by the children and their qualities varies from one to another. In this survey, 380 respondents participated of which, 63.40 per cent respondents surveyed are men and the rest of the 36.60 per cent of the sample population are female.

Further, it has been observed that 52.90 per cent of respondents are aged between 31-40 years. The study found that 35.31 per cent of the respondents' buying practices are influenced by the TV commercials and 23.25 per cent of the respondents gather firsthand information through newspapers ads and magazines ads. Followed by, it has 7 and 5.60 per cent of the respondents purchase intentions are influenced by outdoor window display, radio commercials, respectively. The entire sample population has claimed that they like to watch 7-11 year kids endorsing TV commercials.

TABLE: 1: VIEWERS' OPINION ON CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN/KIDS USING IN ADS/COMMERCIALS

Characteristics	Sum	Mean	Rank
Very Observant	3029	7.97	2
Extremely Curious	3001	7.90	3
Intense interests	3085	8.12	1
Excellent memory	2742	7.22	5
Long attention span	2710	7.13	6
Excellent reasoning skills	2788	7.34	4
Well-developed	2652	6.98	7
Fluent and flexible thinking	2325	6.12	8
Elaborate and original thinking	1885	4.96	10
Excellent problem solving skills	1696	4.46	11
Learns quickly and with less practice and repetition	1636	4.31	12
Unusual and / or vivid imagination	2161	5.69	9

Source: Primary Data

The data analysis presented in the table below indicated the majority of the respondents claim that child endower ads are of intensive interest, very observant and extremely curious characters. Similarly the sample subjects have expressed their high degree of appreciation towards the excellent reasoning skills, excellent memory, long attention span, well-developed powers of abstraction, conceptualization, and synthesis quickly and easily sees relationship in ideas, objects, or facts that a child as celebrity processes. Followed by, it has found that factors like fluent and flexible thinking, unusual and / or vivid imagination, elaborate and original thinking attract majority of adult viewers' surveyed about the children used in the TV commercials. A portion of the respondents is expressed that they like child endorser for their excellent problem solving skills, learns quickly and with less practice/ repetition characters.

TABLE: 2 VIEWERS' PERCEPTION ON LEVEL OF INFLUENCES CREATED ON BUYERS' BY CHILD ENDORSERS

Particulars	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Sum	Mean	Rank
Decision Making								
Brans identification	153 (40.26)	166 (43.68)	61 (16.05)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1612	4.24	1
Product Selection	153 (40.26)	14 (36.84)	75 (19.74)	12 (3.16)	0 (0.00)	1574	4.14	2
Point Time of purchase	114 (30.00)	102 (26.84)	140 (36.84)	24 (6.32)	0 (0.00)	1446	3.81	4
Discretionary spending power	128 (33.68)	125 (32.89)	102 (26.84)	25 (6.58)	0 (0.00)	1496	3.94	3
Autonomy	91 (23.95)	138 (36.32)	126 (33.16)	12 (3.16)	13 (3.42)	1422	3.74	5
Buying Behavior								
Comparison of brand	203 (53.42)	165 (43.42)	12 (3.16)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1711	4.50	1
Comparison of product	203 (53.42)	152 (40.00)	12 (3.16)	13 (3.42)	0 (0.00)	1685	4.43	2
Comparison of price	215 (56.58)	89 (23.42)	63 (16.58)	13 (3.42)	0 (0.00)	1646	4.33	3
Better usage of promotional offers	153 (40.26)	141 (37.11)	86 (22.63)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1587	4.18	4
Influencing other to buy the product marketed under same brand name	165 (43.42)	115 (30.25)	100 (26.32)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1585	4.17	5

Source: Primary Data

The influences of child endorsement in TV commercial on the buying practices of consumers'/viewers' are classified as two. One is influences on decision making i.e., deciding to buy a product and other while making the purchase. It has been inferred that child endorsement in TV commercials has helped the potential customers in the brand identification and product selection. Moreover, the ad tactics of using kids as brand ambassadors is well recognised when the consumers are able to discretionary their spending power and expresses autonomy in decision making to either buy or not buy a product. The above stated five variables are rated in the first to fifth places based on Likert's scaling techniques and with the support of weighted average score. The variables have scored an average score of 4.24, 4.14, 3.94, 3.81 and 3.74, respectively.

Similarly it has also evidenced from the primary survey results that the consumers' /viewers of child endorsed ads have developed the buying behaviour qualities like: comparison of brand, comparison of product, comparison of price for heterogeneous brands available in the market for a homogeneous product. Similarly the ads endorsed by the kids have succeeded in developing a sense of better usage of promotional offers made by the manufacturer/marketers of a product by the consumers' and turning consumers' concentration towards other products marketed under same brand name. The variables have scored an average score of 4.50, 4.43, 4.33, 4.18 and 4.17, respectively.

Thus, child endorsement in TV commercials has helped the potential customers in the brand identification and comparison of brand with other available in the market.

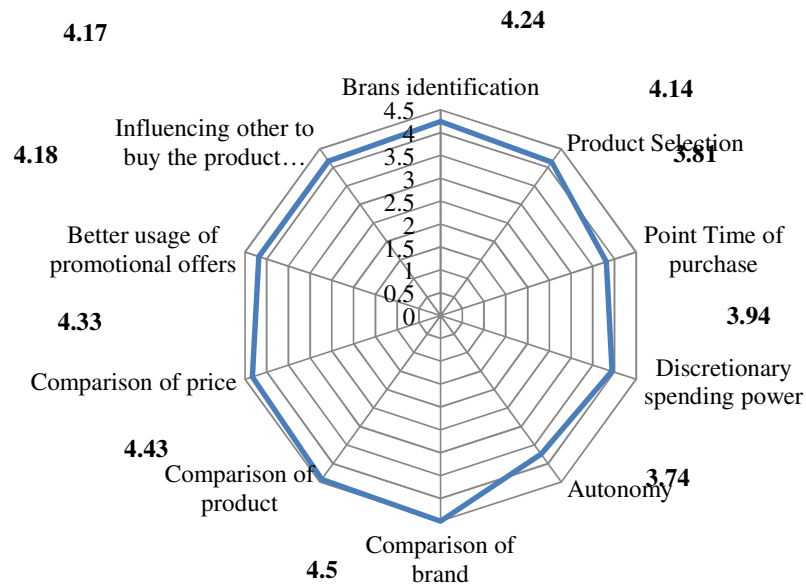


EXHIBIT: 1 VIEWERS' PERCEPTION ON LEVEL OF INFLUENCES CREATED ON BUYERS' BY CHILD ENDORSERS

Ho: There exists significant association between products endorsed by the kids and its influences of the buying behaviour.

TABLE: 3
RESULT OF ANOVA VIEWERS' PERCEPTION ON LEVEL OF
INFLUENCES CREATED ON BUYERS' BY CHILD ENDORSERS (DECISION MAKING)

Variables	Source	Sum of Square	DF	Mean square	F	Sig
Decision Making Abilities						
Brand identification	Between Groups	9.082	4	2.270	4.662	.001
	Within Groups	182.644	375	.487		
	Total	191.726	379	-		
Product Selection	Between Groups	12.951	4	3.238	4.754	.001
	Within Groups	255.376	375	.681		
	Total	268.326	379	-		
Point Time of purchase	Between Groups	43.900	4	10.975	14.110	.000
	Within Groups	291.690	375	.778		
	Total	335.589	379	-		
Discretionary spending power	Between Groups	63.629	4	15.907	22.523	.000
	Within Groups	264.855	375	.706		
	Total	328.484	379	-		
Autonomy	Between Groups	56.141	4	14.035	17.510	.000
	Within Groups	300.585	375	.802		
	Total	356.726	379	-		
Buying Behavior						
Comparison of brand	Between Groups	35.232	4	8.808	39.432	.000
	Within Groups	83.765	375	.223		
	Total	118.997	379	-		
Comparison of product	Between Groups	87.719	4	21.930	44.820	.000
	Within Groups	183.481	375	.489		
	Total	271.200	379	-		
Comparison of price	Between Groups	127.345	4	31.836	51.008	.000
	Within Groups	234.052	375	.624		
	Total	361.397	379	-		
Better usage of promotional offers	Between Groups	69.233	4	17.308	41.092	.000
	Within Groups	157.954	375	.421		
	Total	227.187	379	-		
Influencing other to buy the product	Between Groups	39.586	4	9.896	17.318	.000
	Within Groups	214.296	375	.571		
	Total	253.882	379	-		

Level of Significance: 5 per cent

The data indicates in above table shows that probability value of ANOVA at 5 per cent level establishes good relationship between the variables tested. Therefore, the null hypothesis framed stands accepted and it concluded that there exists significant association between products enclosed by the kids and its influences of the buying behaviour.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The empirical findings of the study claims that majority of the sample though did not support the ads endorsed by the children or child celebrity, they are well aware of the above it's positive and negative impact on the consumers. The sample population has said that child

endorser has certain qualities like intense interests, very observant, extremely curious to learn new/innovativeness. Sample television viewers' have appropriated to the weightage messages that are passed through child models by the marketer, they have also acknowledged the fact that child celebrity endorsement enhances the buyer's belief and they are satisfied in their buying process.

SUGGESTIONS

- From the study it has observed that majority of the sample household subjects are well aware of the benefits or harms of using a child in promotional advertisements, Thus, it is suggested that the product message, product benefits, its positioning and frequency of TV advertisements should be increased to convert non - users to users.
- From the study it has been found that majority respondents like to watch the celebrities in the advertisement. Thus, the marketers are suggested to adhered an ethical code in frame the advertisement themes, it should be honest and provide the correct information about the brand. A strong belief has to be created among the respondents that the celebrities do use the products endorsed by them.
- Companies may wish to select child celebrities who are using their products; otherwise, advertising and media strategies should be developed to ensure that the celebrities are using the same brands that they are endorsing.
- Television advertising those use child celebrity in the ads must think about employing innovative methods to attract the attention or grab viewers' focus with lovely music, lyrics, Jingles, humor and repeated messages. Since today, As India many channel operates on air and TV viewer generally skips the advertisement to watch another programmed in other channels.
- Marketers must also take into consideration that usage of child celebrity should not aims to create pester power among the young kids.

CONCLUSION

The crescendo of celebrities endorsing brands has been steadily increasing over the past years. Marketers overtly acknowledge the power of celebrities in influencing consumer-purchasing decisions. It is a ubiquitously accepted fact that celebrity endorsement can bestow special attributes upon a product that it may have lacked otherwise. But everything is not hunky-dory; celebrities are after all mere mortals made of flesh and blood like us. If a celebrity can aggrandize the merits of a brand, he or she can also exacerbate the image of a brand. This concepts stands fit even an advertisement or product promotion effects are carried with a child models acting as brand ambassadors.

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