

Brand Identity Relevance and Co-Existence with Star Power

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ABSTRACT

Advertising as the most effective promotion tool available to marketer has been employing celebrity as figure to help focus the message and eventually sells the marketer's solution. The effectiveness of advertising to close the deal has been widely accepted by both academics and practitioners alike. The topic whether celebrities are even necessary has been debated by both field of marketing. As such, this paper aims to investigate the role of celebrity to promote a marketer's solution through advertising. Through qualitative research using phenomenological approach, it is found that celebrity character have positive attribution towards fastening the message delivery and helping advertising recall. The research also found that celebrities needs to be chosen by their characteristic that matches the brand's solution and not by choosing celebrities who are at the peak of their fame.

Keywords: Marketing communication, advertising, celebrity endorsement

1. INTRODUCTION

People today are exposed to advertising attempts on print media, online, social media, radio, and television on a daily, if not hourly, basis. Modern marketers make every effort to promote their brands and entice customers to buy them. The emphasis is on attracting consumer buy intentions and building good connections not just to keep existing spending power but also to convince new consumers to purchase. Global advertising spending is still at all time, dented in a moment during the early days of global pandemic lockdown but return in force just a quarter away. Dentsu, a Japanese international communication agency, estimated that advertising spending from these corporations will reach US\$ 680 billion in 2022, up from US\$634 billion in 2021 [1]. This figure is not without cause; marketers simply switched from conventional physical media to internet media as a result of the epidemic and were able to sustain engagement and consequently purchase from their target audiences.

Advertising is here to stay, as past researches has stated, where compared to other promotional tools, it is the only one that can effectively deliver a message, a story and initiate willingness to purchase in one effort [2]. In the 1980s, before the prevalence of Internet, marketers are given ample time for advertising recall through television media of old. Hefflin & Haygood postulated that spacing an advertising in a 1 week and 3-week interval allows for the perfect recall of an advertising message [3]. However, that was the 1980s which does not take into account the use of Internet media. After the prevalence of Internet, advertising

scene was changed so fundamentally that a subset of research regarding advertising frequency had to be renewed. During the early 2000s, researches regarding the use of Internet as medium for advertising paints a very different picture. Structurally, advertising on the Internet comes not as a fixed timeslot, but instead as randomized chance depending on the marketer budget and the given specific target audience based on their profile [4]. One of the proven methods to increase advertising on the internet is simply through increased frequency [5]. However, many researchers and marketers disprove this method as it risks factor is high in terms of diminishing return and ineffectiveness of delivering value in marketing sense.

The consensus to advertising on the Internet seemingly anti-climactic, as with traditional media, it is found that the primary motivation to use the medium is to create a coherent informative message as key performance indicator when marketer adopts advertising on the Internet [6]. This statement corroborates David (1985) and Franklin (2007) research, that advertising which functions as advertising medium is beneficial to its audience [7] [8]. However, when every marketer in the world starts to adopt the same strategy, the playing field became even and making it harder to attract attention without having to resort back to increasing advertising frequency and thus the higher cost of marketing.

The logical next step is then not just to create great informative advertising but also to adopt celebrity endorsement as a tried-and-true method to increase conversion from information to action [9]. The implication of celebrity endorsement is wide ranging, as different

nations have tested the effectiveness to drive purchase through celebrity endorsement is the same the world over, from India to the United States [10] [11]. The main key point of the use of celebrity endorsement is the meaning transfer, a philosophical and psychological view of attribution that benefits the product or service that is associated with the celebrity perceived value on the society [12]. Celebrity endorsement is not without fault. A celebrity status in the society might fell out of appreciation when they are intertwined with scandal. Case in point, Luna Maya, a notable Indonesian actress in the late 2000s, fell out of grace after she was involved in a private video that got circulated to the public [13]. Her status as a representative of a technological brand quickly revoked from fear of association to the brand she represented. This action is in line with research by Carrillat et al [14] that celebrity endorsement carries risk factor that attribution of the celebrity action represents the brand it carried as well.

1.1. Our Contribution

Even though the case against celebrity endorsement has been researched by academics and are widely used by academics, this research is seeking to shine light another point against the use of celebrity endorsement in advertising. With the prevalence of a particular celebrity when their popularity at its peak, will it risk the disassociation of the product they endorse? Will these celebrities at the peak of their fame endorsing many product at the same time will only benefit the celebrity, but reduce the recall of what brand, product or service they endorse? This study will asses whether the use of celebrity endorsement is in-line with the brand identity of the marketer that utilizes it.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Advertising

Advertising is an endeavor to create value that is anticipated to build a picture that its audience will remember in order to change their view of the goods being advertised. According to Nugroho and Harjanto, advertising, through its proposal, actively adds value to the product being sold in order to establish a relevant image in order to affect the behavior of its intended demography. The development of this value will be associated to the product, and its demography will associate it as such and be interested in owning it as a result [15].

Advertising is always the primary marketing approach used for efficient brand expansion, establishing awareness for the product or service being advertised first and foremost [2]. However, advertising through existing media is not always the most efficient or cost-effective approach to fulfill the advertiser's stated aims. This is due to the fact that advertising is expensive when compared to other promotional strategies in the marketing mix. This is not to say that advertising mediums are exclusively available to

large corporations. The concept is that, as important and well-established as advertising is for driving sales, it is also crucial to properly evaluate the usage of multiple communication channels before relying solely on advertising for marketing communication operations.

Advertising is not perfect; the high barrier to entry in using it stems from its expense, which is why users of advertisement typically revolve around the sector's largest corporations. It is not, however, without justification. Previous research has demonstrated that using marketing communication has a net positive effect on sales. A customer of a particular product or service will go through a decision-making process, and one typical model, coined by Philip Kotler, is known as the AIDA (awareness, interest, desire, action) model.

Because the first stage in acknowledging the presence of a product or service is awareness, a strong response generated by marketing communication activity such as advertising is required to elicit a favorable response [16]. Advertising thus has the necessary task of changing a person's perspective from not knowing to knowing about the existence of a thing, and subsequently changing the person's attitude from not knowing to knowing, and lastly enjoying it [2]. As a result, advertising a significant positive response from the entity that uses it comes in the form of its power to influence perception and convince. Persuasion in marketing, according to O'Shaughnessy, is the goal of all marketing communication efforts, because effective advertising is virtually always persuasive advertising, and while not all advertising aims to convince, those that best persuade are more likely to win in a competitive setting [17].

2.2. Measuring Advertising

From the early 1960s to the 2010s, measuring the efficacy of advertising has remained the same. Quantitative assessment was pushed aside in favor of qualitative surveying and in-depth focus group discussions [18] [19]. This is because marketers needed information on the messaging, as well as whether the desired demographics understood the meaning of the message in the advertisement, rather than just the number of people who saw the advertisement. Most importantly, because both soft and hard sell advertising carry identity in the form of the product's brand image.

2.3. Human Behavior

The need for advertising stems from the primary thing that marketers aim to impose on their target audience, which is behavioral modification. One strategy for influencing this behavior is to change the audience's impression of the topic matter. When a product or service is regarded as providing a solution to a problem for the audience, it is more likely to be accepted than merely providing data. This concept stems from how a person perceives information, how they perceive, arrange, and interpret it in order to construct a meaningful image of oneself [20]. This point of view informs the categorization of consumer-perceived

advantages. Many marketers utilize the concept to gain a better understanding of their demographic users and to inform product development and marketing opportunities. It is tough to change human behavior, and it takes a long time to get it right. However, the benefit outweighs the negative. Understanding these traits can lead to marketing and products that actually resonate with specific consumers, similar to segmentation variables.

2.4. Semiotics

To achieve resonance, many marketers employ semiotics. Semiotics is the primary strategy for achieving audience relevance and brand awareness. Semiotics is the study of all the signs and symbols in a culture that interact with the signs and symbols in a brand, whether communications, packaging, or product, to develop customer understanding. As a result, semiotics may be an useful tool for increasing brand awareness, strengthening brand connections, and incorporating market-differentiating brand traits [21]. The issue with semiotics is that every innovation, whether in communication, product design, or packaging design, is based on the observer's experience. This implies that every new product, brand, or message will make sense to purchasers right away because the outcomes are drawn from the person's personal experience [22].

2.5. Attribution Factors

When a connection is established through persuasion through advertising, the idea of brand attribution leads to favorable recollection of the product and provides a comparative advantage [23]. This idea is supported by Rossolatos, who believes that a good marketing communication effort will foster a sense of personal connection between the product and its intended audience, resulting in a strong association [24]. In the end, or as planned by the marketer, a strong correlation leads to the closing of the sale, or when the desired audience purchases and consumes the solution. There are two types of advertising that can create this correlation: soft sell advertising and hard sell advertising.

Simply described, soft selling advertising is advertising with an indirect selling message that primarily creates a desired mood in its audience that ties to the emotion given by the brand or product. The importance of mood has been documented as an effective method for creating resonance between a product and its intended demography [25]. For example, a children's cough medicine product will nearly always show a mother lovingly delivering the medicine to her children, surrounded by soft lighting, and if the advertising style is audio visual, soothing music from the current mellow pop genre will be played in the background. This simple scenario portrays the feeling that depicts a mother's love for her children.

2.6. Brand Identity

Soft selling advertising imagery is profoundly founded in delivering deeper meaning and knowledge that touches the emotional aspect of the person watching it. This is in sharp contrast to hard selling advertising, where the goal is to cut through the emotional excess and offer advertising as an informational medium [26]. Even if some believe that the distinction between soft and hard marketing is minor, the concept of communicating a message explicitly or subliminally can still be viewed as a distinct effort [27].

In regards to attribution, the key factor of using celebrity endorsement is the image transference from the celebrity to the brand identity it is applied to. According to Tian et al (2021), the image transfer is simply based off normative association where a character, in this case the celebrity, is associated with and then it is associated with brand identity and then amplified through resonance effect [12]. Brand identity itself is a construct created by the marketer.

Jean-Nol Kapferer outlines six characteristics of brand identity, which he divides into two dimensions: expressions and construction source. Body type, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image are examples of brand identification points [28]. These principles can only be realized when the brand connects with the consumer, and strong brands are capable of merging these components into an effective whole in order to establish a short, clear, and compelling brand identity. Each point in Kapferer's model has a special feature. Internally, a brand must give recognizable features from physical and metaphorical aspects such as what the brand wishes to be identified with, what principles it adheres to, and what the brand character is. On the outside, the marketer must describe its audience's personality and self-image, as well as whether they want their audience to feel something after using the product. In this aspect, Kapferer's model closely resembles Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat analysis, in which internal and external variables influence a marketer's solution performance and/or design.

The creation of brand identity in itself is an effort to create unique selling proposition of a brand's solution. The pivot point for any marketer to focus on has always been the unique selling factor. The idea is simple: if a marketer can design a unique product, the product will have no equal or even substitution, allowing the marketer to charge whatever price they want due to supply and demand law. In economics, a non-substitutable resource or product provides the institution with a competitive edge [29]. Unfortunately, as technology and knowledge progresses, full access to procedures and resources has exposed the market to industrial secrets that have generated such distinct selling points. As a result, Rosser Reeves proposes the Unique Selling Proposition, the idea that a specific quality is no longer inherent in the product itself, but is instead manufactured through communication effort [30]. Rosser Reeves caused a division in the marketing community because marketers realized that the construction of identity for their product now derives from fiction or stories, rather than a unique solution.

2.7. Consumer Perception

The construction of these stories is, in part, a process of careful communication on the side of the marketer as a communicator to build meaning from a set of symbols for the target audience to accept as it was originally projected by the marketer. The ultimate goal of such communication is for the communicator and its audience to have the same interpretation of meaning, with no misunderstandings occurring in the process. However, communication as a process is not flawless because each individual's view of a circumstance is left to their own experience, resulting in varied interpretations of an event [31].

A vital link in marketing activity is the formation of a brand image in the minds of consumers. As a result, brand image is important in assisting the brand's performance in competing in the market, and one method of establishing a brand image is to take advantage of client perceptions. Consumer perceptions are used to assess one's own brand image, as well as the image of competitors or other firms. The brand's perceived manifestation determines the image that will be expected in the future. Brand image is the process through which people organize and interpret their sensory perceptions of a brand to acquire a better understanding of it. When every audience or consumer sees the same brand, though, their reactions are quite likely to be very different. For some, Rolls Royce is considered as the apex of personal transportation brand, but for others, its use is exaggerated because its functions and benefits can be substituted by far cheaper yet similarly functioning car such as Toyota or even Honda.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study brings into focus and clarify the observed phenomena under investigation, notably the relationship between brand identity coexistence and celebrity endorsement. As a result, in order to answer the question posed in the first chapter, the data gathered and processed will be subjected to focus group discussion as a technique of grouping the respondents, with interpretation based on an inductive mindset and follow ups through snowball technique. This reasoning technique will employ the phenomenological paradigm, which allows for a more in-depth exploration of truth and conclusion. In the realm of marketing communication, the use of focus group discussions as a strategy for eliciting multiple points of view and experiences is common as it suits the research point of view to dig in to the respondent's psyche [32]. Focus group conversations are employed not only because they are popular in the marketing communication business for researching responses, but they are also a valid approach for exposing a diversity of opinions and experiences. Importantly, this method is applied in context to better understand social phenomena like as respondents' exposure to advertising and its relation to their propensity to change their impression of the product or service being advertised.

Inductive procedures and qualitative approaches were used to process the data in this study. The goal of this study is to learn about the facts, phenomena, variables, and conditions that emerged during the examination. This qualitative study will interpret and describe current state-of-the-art data, as well as attitudes and perspectives. The goal of a phenomenological method is to characterize and illuminate a specific experience based on how the person experiencing it perceives it. Phenomenological procedures are epistemologically anchored on a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity to emphasize the importance of personal perspective and interpretation. As a result, they're useful for deciphering subjective experience, gaining insights into people's intentions and actions, and cutting through the clutter of assumptions and accepted practices. The process of connecting separate experiences in order to obtain a fundamental and comprehensive image, as well as a reflective structural analysis to synthesize the essence of the topic, are all part of the phenomenological approach. The researcher provides a study of individual life experiences regarding a phenomenon as described by the participants in phenomenological research, which is taken from economics, management, and psychology [33].

Because expanding the sample size in qualitative research does not provide additional insight into the subject being examined, 15 people were chosen. The depth of insights from the subjects is more significant than the size of the qualitative research to substantiate statements of prevalence or incidence. As a result, 50 respondents are sufficient for a single study including individuals questioned for qualitative review [34]. Although sample size is dependent on a variety of epistemological, methodological, and practical considerations, Sarah Elsie Baker and Rosalind Edwards believe that 15 interviews are required to achieve data saturation. [35]. Although Hennink believes that 8 respondents is a suitable number for the focused issue, this study will use 15 as a baseline. As requirement respondents have a minimum of bachelor's degree, with median age of 35 years old, and is exposed to advertising effort in audio visual form in the past year. To gather the information, participant observation as well as in-depth online interviews with participants was taken in Jakarta from September 2021 to October 2021.

4. DISCUSSION

Advertising can be viewed as a distraction from the regular program or event during which it is displayed. A strategic placement with the correct messaging, on the other hand, goes a long way toward eliciting a good response from the reply. The respondent agrees with this viewpoint since advertising with appropriate content is perceived as an informational source, rather than filling a gap between shows. All of the respondents think that informational advertising is more favorably accepted than advertising that is perceived as a hard sell. This is consistent with prior research, which revealed that advertising viewed as information is valued more than advertising that just reveals

the presence of a product or service without providing any context. This statement supports David and Franklin's research, which found that advertising that serves as a channel for advertising is useful to its audience [7] [8]. Advertising that includes information on product characteristics and benefits are preferred above advertisements that just show a slice of life, particularly those that involve celebrity endorsers such as actors or singers.

The respondents view on the benefit of celebrity endorsement would be perfect when the celebrity is directly associated with the particular field they are famous for. Through snowball effect, the discussion singled out Nadine Chandrawinata, as celebrity endorser for protein drink and mineral water. The association effect of Nadine Chandrawinata as previous title holder of Puteri Indonesia pageant show and her published likeness of travelling imparts a top physical condition and the correlation between the protein drink and mineral water endorsement is still strong even though the advertising of the protein drink is 3 years ago and the mineral water is 6 years ago. This correlates with Dwivedi et al (2015) research that it is easier for audience to recall celebrity endorsed advertising when the product and the celebrity recognition is in the same category [36].

The same cannot be said with Joe Taslim, an Indonesian action movie star who came to international fame after starring on several Hollywood films. His rise to stardom is accompanied with plenty of endorsement for all kind of products from men care, to banks, to recently crypto wallet advertisement. The respondents cannot accurately recall products that Joe Taslim endorses as he currently used extensively by marketers to associate his fame. This is not a desirable trait as indicated by Halonen-Knight et al (2010) research that postulated who benefitted from the advertising, whether it is the celebrity who enjoyed additional air time from appearing on the advertising or the marketer who wanted to be associated with the celebrity. The answer is quite simply the celebrity themselves and not the marketer [37]. The problem as described by the respondent was that there are no discernible association between the celebrity and the product they endorse, repeating research result of Dwivedi et al (2015). The issue is then compounded with the high cost of hiring the celebrity themselves. With certain degree of confidence, celebrity at their peak of fame would garner high fee to show in certain media as researched by Muda et al (2017) [38].

The gold benchmark in any advertising research effectiveness is recalling advertising effort. The more a person recalls an advertisement and its message, the more likely it is that the campaign was successful. However, renowned skeptics such as Roser Reeves argue that if large advertising spending does not result in ongoing exposure to the target population, then it is all for naught [30]. The respondent, on the other hand, asserts that frequency means nothing if the advertisement isn't interesting or even instructive. Tellis' three-factor approach to brand recognition through advertising is supported by this research by Tellis (1997) [39]. Instead of merely filling the

media channel with adverts, the three-factor method is a strategy for generating genuine engagement from its audiences. While flooding the media channel with advertising guarantees that the brand, product, or service is remembered, the call to action or willingness to act on the advertising is weak and sometimes leads to resentment because the ad provides little useful information other than the product's appearance

In essence, the use of proper celebrity that is involved in the same category of the brand's solution is expected by the respondents. After all, marketer main goal for using the celebrity is for advertising recall so the audience can enter the final phase of decision making which is to purchase the brand's solution. The respondent agrees that proper use of celebrity that correlates well with the brand's solution category creates faster recognition of the messaging and creates faster adoption to purchase the product or service, in line with Tian et al (2021) research.

Celebrity endorsement does not always work as perfectly, especially in the food and beverage category, one that involve taste. The respondent understand that everyone's tastes are unique. As a result, when a celebrity claims that a product they consume is appetizing, the respondents all claim that they will not believe it unless they try it. This is a clear reflection of Oswald's (2012) work, which states that each person's experience is unique, and that each person's past experience shapes their expectations [22]. Thus, celebrity endorsement works perfectly when it is combined with the respected celebrity association, their work in the field that hastens the association between the audience, and the brand's solution.

5. CONCLUSION

Celebrity endorsement is a topic that needs to be threaded lightly. Yes, it has many positive attributes, especially combined with marketing communication activity, specifically advertising. The positive attribution to the celebrity status elevates the brand, product, or service on par with the celebrity itself. However, marketer needs to take into account the phenomena of star power itself, in combination with the brand identity strength. When celebrity achieved popular status, especially those who peaked overnight or just recently, other marketers raced to the celebrity in question and then asked them to endorse their brand, product, or service. This will result to washing out effect, where the marketer's solution will get lost by simply the sheer amount of advertising the supposed celebrity took a part in. The resulting outcome is that it only benefits the celebrity in question as the intended audience will not recall the product they endorsed due to the many brand, product or service they endorsed. In this regard, it is best to avoid celebrity who is currently peaking in popularity to maintain focus on perfect association between the brand and the celebrity, where in the end, it benefits the marketer and not just adding screen time for the celebrity themselves.

Deciding on a “B-list” celebrity, or second rate in terms of popularity can be considered a safe option, especially when the celebrity themselves are active in a particular field that brand, product or service is active in. A martial artist celebrity who stars in action movies would be a perfect candidate to star in energy drink commercial, sports apparel and other activity heavy solutions, definitely less so as representative of a bank or blockchain wallet service. This is because the attribution effect of the celebrity should be in line with the marketer solution, creating a perfect synergy between both and benefits the marketer directly.

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