

CONSUMERS' PERCEPTION ON CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT ACCORDING TO THEIR AGE

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Abstract

Celebrity endorsement is a modern marketing communication tool. Celebrities are often present in advertisings, so that this phenomenon has become a trend today. This type of advertising has a high potential because consumers are attracted to the celebrities. They are overwhelmed by their everyday life, so they need ideals and role models. That's the reason why using celebrity brand ambassadors in advertisings, is a very good marketing strategy of the producers. In the era of information and ads, the testimonials have the power to catch the consumers' attention in an advertising and to increase the visibility of the advertised product. This happens thanks to their fame, glamour, beauty and charisma. For this reason, the marketers are looking for famous, beautiful, successful, popular testimonials to drive the image of a company and their products. So, the celebrity brand ambassadors play an important role for the advertising and image of a brand, but also for the lives of the consumers. The everyday life of the stars, their behavior, the products they use, influence the consumers' orientation in life and the buying decision. The objective of this paper is to determine if celebrity endorsement works for all the people or the perception on this trend is different according to the age of the consumers. Two categories of consumers were asked about celebrity endorsement if their presence in advertisings influence their decision and buying intention of a product or not. The results of the research have shown that there really are differences in the perception on celebrity endorsement between the two groups of consumers, younger and older than 40 years. All of them think that advertising is very important and that they often change their options according to the commercial of a product. The difference is that older people tend to believe more in celebrity brand ambassadors and in their positive impact on the promoted product than the younger ones, which are more realistic and reticent with this phenomenon.

Keywords

celebrity endorsement, advertising, age, signal strategy, consumer, attention, buying decision.

JEL Classification

M10, M31

Introduction

In the era of information and communication, using celebrities in advertisings has become a trend. The people responsible with the marketing department have realized the importance of the celebrity's presence in advertisings and the influence of the famous people on the

buying decision of the consumers. Because of this the number of advertisements with celebrities grows continuously. The stars have a big influence on the behavior of normal people and can make them buy the advertised products. The testimonial advertising can be done through different channels such as television, printed, electronic and social media (Zipporah & Mberia, 2014).

People who watch an advertising featuring a famous person have the tendency to watch more the characteristics of the celebrity and to talk a lot about them. That's also because usually people tend to watch longer the familiar faces in an advertising than the unfamiliar ones (Devue et al., 2009). Here appears the overshadowing effect. The celebrities catch the attention of the consumers, so they don't pay anymore the needed attention to the advertised brand (Erfgen et al., 2015). Choosing the testimonial is also a big decision for marketers.

According to Byrne et al. (2003) the secret to succeed with an advertising is to find the suitable famous, credible, popular, charismatic and internationally known person. This will be sympathetic to the public and will bring the consumers closer to the promoted brand. Celebrities will also influence them to make the desired buying decision. It is clear that some people have a positive perception on Celebrity Brand Ambassadors and some people don't. Some of them tend to include this category of advertising in the fake news category. So that this type of commercials don't influence them or their buying decision (Tanțau et al., 2018).

Several studies have shown that the behavior of consumers differs depending on the generation to which they belong (Popa & Pelau, 2016). The question is if the perception of celebrity endorsement is the same according to the age category of the consumers. The participants in this research are two groups of consumers with the age under and above 40 years. The objective is to observe how receptive to the celebrity endorsement are the older consumers in comparison to the younger ones.

Literature review

A famous person is someone who is recognized by the public. Using celebrities in advertising is a very good strategy because they catch the consumers' attention through their image, carrier and name. Celebrities are like human brands. Their professional activity and their personal life is a point of interest for the consumers. Marketing specialists know how to gain from this and choose the right celebrities to promote specific brands, so that the companies sell nowadays due to celebrity endorsement (Nistoreanu et al, 2017; Holmes & Redmond, 2014).

A public person has most of the time a strong influence on the buying behavior of the customer. This is not the case of a normal person as well. (McCracken, 1989). Commercials with celebrities are typical for the modern era of advertising. Public persons can transfer their public image on the advertised brand. This phenomenon was accepted as a trend at the beginning, but now it has become a marketing communication tool. Year by year, the companies invest important amounts of money in celebrity endorsement. The spent amounts are represented by millions of dollars, for contracting famous stars like football or basketball players, models, singers or actors. For example, Pepsi has collaboration contracts with a lot of famous people like Cindy Crawford or Puff Diddy, which promoted Diet Pepsi (McCracken, 1989).

This is a proof that celebrity endorsement is a very popular communication tool. The producers buy consumers' loyalty with a high price, through a celebrity. An important aspect is the match-up between the promoted product and the celebrity. That's the reason why all the marketers and company owners must pay a lot of attention in choosing the right testimonial to promote their products (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016). The endorser has to fit with the promoted product as there must exist a connection between brand and celebrity. In this way, the advertising is really efficient. The best-case scenario is when there is a natural

relationship between the profession of the celebrity and the advertised products. Therefore, for example, the people from sports are efficient in convincing the audience about the sports products (Till & Busler, 2000).

Of course, a celebrity brand ambassador can also have a negative impact on a brand or for the image of the company. For example, if the testimonial has an inappropriate behavior or a negative image, this fact can be reflected in the promoted product. If consumers no longer like the celebrity brand ambassador, they will no longer use the promoted product.

The advertising of multiple brands by a single celebrity can also destroy the marketing campaign of a specific brand. Because in this way they lose their power of persuasion and credibility and the relationship celebrity-consumer will get slowly lost. As example David Beckham, the football player advertises perfumes, shoes and drinks. So, the consumers remember they saw David Beckham in commercials, but unfortunately, they don't remember the advertised product anymore. The commercial no longer catch the consumers' attention on the product, which is detrimental to the brand (Makumbura, 2015). So, the match-up brand-celebrity is extremely important, celebrities must fit together with the advertised products. The choice of the presence of a testimonial in a commercial should be made by context and not random.

Celebrity brand ambassadors are also a method of money-burning. Consumers pay a lot of attention to their social position. People usually want to wear the right clothes, to buy the right perfume, to drink the right drink, to eat the right food. The consumers' perception is influenced by the presence of the famous person. For example, if a consumer watches two commercials for two different brands, where one includes a testimonial and one not, he will probably consider that the brand which is promoted by the famous person is better and has a higher quality. So, this influences his buying decision. The testimonials are like a reference group for a lot of consumers. They are attracted by celebrities, invest time and energy to look like them, to be closer to them. This happens because celebrities become idols, valued characters for the consumers through their social media presence and lifestyle. This is a theory about social influence. The consumer wants to have a behavior similar with the celebrities. For this reason, they buy the brands promote by testimonials, in the attempt to shape their own image. (Alberta et al, 2017).

The testimonials serve as a signaling strategy for companies. They can easily increase the market acceptance and the sales, making in this way the advertising very efficient and using celebrity endorsement as a good investment. Besides, the stars bring their own experience with them. Often people are motivated by the attitude, emotions or behavior of the public person (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002). For the celebrity endorsement is good that the fans of the testimonials are actually the consumers who react enthusiastic and positive to the brand, so that they rise the value of the brand (Schau et al., 2009).

The stars differentiate themselves from the normal people through characteristics like attractiveness, beauty, an extraordinary lifestyle or charisma. According to Friedman, a celebrity brand ambassador—is a person who is known by the public for his or her achievements in other areas than that of the endorsed product. The celebrities easily reach a high level of attention, recognition and loyalty from the side of the consumers. Celebrity endorsement is a real chance today, in the era of intense competition. All the companies have as a main goal to encourage consumers to buy their products and remain in their minds (Friedman et al., 1979). The testimonials can be like a catalyst. “Celebrities as brands” is a true sales challenge. On the other hand, testimonials can also have a negative impact on the image of a company and bring disadvantages for it. If they have a negative image or an inappropriate behavior, this reflects also on the promoted brand. If there is no more a connection between consumer and celebrity, there will also don't like and don't buy the advertised product anymore.

More than 50 billion dollars are spent every year on celebrity brand ambassadors (Zamudiu, 2015). Companies invest huge amounts of money in celebrity advertising. Despite of this, an important cost is sometimes overlooked, namely: some of the brands may be rejected by the testimonial they want to have in their commercial while negotiating. This rejection can be critical, because the strategy of a company can depend all on a specific testimonial, who should promote the brand and product. The celebrities are advised to become more popular and famous, to have more followers on the social media, so they can be attractive and persuasive in the role of a celebrity brand ambassador. So, the choice of a celebrity brand ambassador is very difficult and important for a company.

Celebrity endorsement is an alliance between brands. The celebrity is the human brand and the product is the brand of the company. Both should match together and have an impact on the buying decision of the people. This kind of advertising also helps on the market differentiation. Famous persons usually transfer their personality on the advertised brand. This happens most in the case of beauty industry. Drew Barrymore for example, the actress, signed with the company Cover Girl, a cosmetic producer. This happened thanks to her “energetic yet authentic spirit”, while she was taking the commitment to “bring myself and my personality into it” (Zamudio, 2015).

Research methodology

The objective of the research is to determine the consumers’ perception on the celebrity endorsement, according to their age. The 12 items related to celebrity brand ambassador contain affirmations about their presence in commercials, if the celebrities influence the costumer’s behavior or not, if these have any impact on their buying decision or not. The items have been included in a multiple topic survey, which has been realized in the period December 2018 - January 2019 in the urban population, on a sample of 252 respondents. The validity of the sample related to the consumers’ perception on the celebrity endorsement is given by the Cronbach Alpha value. In this case the Cronbach Alpha value of 0.847 shows a good validity of the data.

In this research we focus on the differences of behavior and perception depending on age of the respondents. The sample has been divided into two groups based on their age: group 1 (defined as G1) consisted of people younger than 40 years and group 2 (defined as G2) included people older 40 years. The sample includes 252 valid responses, out of which 161 respondents with ages younger than 40 years (G1) and 91 respondents with ages older than 40 years (G2). Thanks to the discriminant analysis, we have tested with help of the SPSS 20 the significant differences between the two groups. The results are presented in the following.

Results and discussion

The results of the research show that there are items that show differences for the two age groups and also there are items which show that the consumers’ perception on celebrity endorsement is quite similar, regardless of the age of the respondents. From the 12 analyzed items 6, also half of them, show significant differences, having $p < 0.10$. The rest of 6 items show similar results for both groups. The results for all the items can be observed in table 1. The perception which shows the highest differences is the idea that the products promoted by celebrities are luxury products ($F=10.427$, $p=0.001$). People older than 40 years tend to agree more with the affirmation that the products which are promoted by testimonials are luxury products ($MG2=3.3407$), while young people are more realistic and tend to disagree with it ($MG1=2.5901$). This comes out also from the item which says that the celebrities guarantee for the quality of the promoted products. In this case the results were as follow $F=4.910$, $p=0.028$. So again people over 40 years think that the celebrities guarantee for the quality of the promoted products, more than the other ($MG2=2.8462$). Consumers with the

ages smaller than 40 don't agree that much with it (MG1=2.3602). This shows that younger people are more open to information and they don't trust commercials with celebrities that much. Another difference in the perception between the two group of consumers would be also regarded on the quality of a product promoted by a testimonial (F=3.752, p=0.054). Consumers from the second group, also over 40 years think that the products from commercials with a celebrity have a higher quality then products from normal commercials, without celebrities (MG2=2.8132). Younger people are more reticent to this affirmation (MG1=2.3851). The next affirmation which shows differences between perceptions according to the age of the people would be that the products promoted or worn by testimonials, provide them a better image in the society (F=3.731, p=0.055). Again people over 40 years tend to agree more with it (MG2=3.3736), then the younger people (MG1=2.9006).

Table 1: Discriminant analysis values based on grouping variable age

Item	Mean G1	Mean G2	SD G1	SD G2	F (1,250)	p
I often buy products that are worn or promoted by celebrities	2.3913	2.4396	1.60146	1.73339	.050	.824
I pay more attention to the commercials which include celebrities	2.8075	3.0000	1.80456	1.81965	.658	.418
I think the products promoted by celebrities have a better quality	2.3851	2.8132	1.62812	1.78208	3.752	.054
I think the products promoted by celebrities provide me a better image	2.9006	3.3736	1.87485	1.85381	3.731	.055
Celebrities guarantee for the quality of the promoted products	2.3602	2.8462	1.59903	1.79458	4.910	.028
I think the products promoted by celebrities are luxury products	2.5901	3.3407	1.66385	1.95061	10.427	.001
I think I have a better social status if I wear products promoted by celebrities	2.0932	2.4286	1.47395	1.64751	2.763	.098
I buy a product promoted by a star only if I like him/her	2.3043	2.3846	1.68465	1.73057	.129	.719
I believe celebrities bring benefits to the products they promote	3.7391	4.2198	2.20659	2.12813	2.830	.094
Celebrities can also have a negative impact on the image of the promoted products	4.5342	4.2637	1.80635	1.84893	1.281	.259
Consumers tend to idolatrize and copy certain public figures	5.1242	5.0000	1.80886	1.75752	.280	.597
A consumer often changes their preferences depending on the advertising	4.6832	4.8352	1.49341	1.46260	.611	.435

Observation: G1 are people younger than 40 years; G2 are people older than 40 years
 Source: Own research results

The item, which says that celebrities bring benefits to the products they promote, shows a little difference of perception between the two categories (F=2.830, p=0.094). Younger

people don't agree that much with this idea (MG1=3.7391), as older people do (MG2=2.8132). The last affirmation which shows differences between the mentality of two generations is having a better social status when using or wearing products promoted by celebrities (F=2.763, p=0.098). Older people tend to agree more with the idea that the products promoted by celebrities influence positive the social status (MG2=2.4286), while the group of people under 40 years don't (MG1=2.0932).

There are also similar perceptions regarding celebrity endorsement, despite of the age of the consumers. We can observe this in items like the one in which they often buy or wear products promoted by celebrities (F=0.050, p=0.824>0.10, MG1=2.3913, MG2=2.4396). Another affirmation which both groups tend to disagree with is that they pay more attention to the commercials which include celebrities then to the commercials without celebrities (F=0.658, p=0.418>0.10, MG1=2.8075, MG2=3.0000). Also both people younger and older than 40 years don't buy a product or don't use a service only if they like the testimonial who advertise this (F=0.129, p=0.719>0.10, MG1=2.3043, MG2=2.3846). Another perception which both groups of respondents have is that a celebrity can also have a negative impact on the image of the promoted product (F=1.281, p=0.259>0.10, MG1=4.5342, MG2=4.2637). They all also agree with the fact that the consumers tend to idolatrise the stars and tend to copy their image or lifestyle (F=0.280, p=1.281>0.10, MG1=4.5342, MG2=4.2637). The advertising of a product or service seems to be important for people younger than 40 years but for the older ones as well. They often change their preferences according to the advertising with celebrities (F=0.611, p=0.435>0.10, MG1=4.6832, MG2=4.8352).

Conclusions

The results of the research show that are both differences and similarities regarding the perception of the consumers on celebrity endorsement according to their age. As differences it come out that the people over 40 years tend to believe more in the celebrities from the commercials. They think that the celebrities have a positive impact on the products or services they promote, that a product which is advertised by a celebrity has a higher quality and that the testimonial guarantees for this quality. The group of people over 40 years also tend to believe that the testimonials promote luxury products, which provide the consumers a more attractive image and a better social status. On the other hand, young people are more realistic. They tend to disagree with all this and don't believe that a product promoted by a celebrity is necessarily a luxury product, that it has a higher quality or it provides a better image and social status.

Both groups of respondents also think similar in some situations. They don't pay more attention to a commercial only if this includes a celebrity or don't use or wear a product for this reason. They all admit that consumers usually idolatrise famous people and try to look like them or copy their lifestyle. Also, both categories of consumers agrees with the fact that commercials are very important and that they often change their preferences according to the advertising of the product.

So, it seems that celebrity endorsement has a greater impact on the people over 40 years old than on the younger ones. A reason therefore would be the fact that younger people have more access to information and can search a lot about a desired product or service and it doesn't need to be promoted by a celebrity brand ambassador.

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