

Illegal Celebrity Advertising – An Unknown Truth

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Abstract

Using a celebrity endorser certainly yield better results compared to non-celebrity endorser in the advertisements to endorse a company's brand. Virat Kohli had made contract with several brands for more than \$100 million in the recent past. Others like Deepika Padukone, Akshay Kumar and others have earned several crores from endorsements alone. They appear in the advertisements with a view that they create positive influence on the consumers' mind which may lead to purchase of the endorsed product. However, some shops or firms use celebrity's image in their banners, boards, hoardings without the knowledge of the respective celebrities. This paper analyzes the problems associated with illegal celebrity advertisings and suggests ways to streamline the use of celebrities.

Keywords: Celebrity endorsers, Illegal use, cinestars, endorsement

INTRODUCTION

In the recent years, celebrities like Virat Kohli, Shahruk Khan, Deepika Padukone, made contracts individually with corporate for several crores for a season or a year exclusively for the brand endorsement. Amithab Bachchan, M. S. Dhoni, P. V. Sindhu Aiswarya Rai and others also get huge amount from the endorsements. Companies like Reliance, TATA, HLL, P & G, PEPSI, Coke, TVS, Dabur, Britannia, Hero Honda, LG, Samsung, etc are willing to pay large amount to the celebrities for endorsement of their products categories. They fix the celebrities based on different factors like the nature of the product, type of audience, characteristics of the celebrity like trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness and likeability (Ohanian, 1991; Friedman and Friedman, 1979), fit between the product and celebrity (Tamizhjyothi and Samudhra Rajakumar, 2005) and meaning transfer from the product to celebrity (McCracken, 1986).

The celebrity endorsements rest sometimes on the involvement of the product and its value. Venkatesakumar et al. (2013) concluded that for high involvement / high value item, trustworthiness and attractiveness emerged as most significant constructs and expertise as less important. For the low involvement / low value items, trustworthiness and expertise emerged as more important factor than attractiveness

Keller (1993) confirms that use of celebrity endorsements is an advertising strategy that should enhance the marginal value of the advertisement expenditure, and create brand equity by means of the secondary association of the celebrity with the brand. To their loyal followers and to much of the general public, celebrities represents an idealization of life that most people love to live (Schiffman, 1991). Hence firms allot a major portion of the budget to celebrity endorsement contract. They give advertisements in television, newspaper, magazines, journals, outdoor advertisements like hoardings, posters, banners, wall paintings, and also through Internet. . If negative information about either entity is displayed on media may result in a damaged consumer evaluation of both entities (Zipporah and Mberia, 2014).

ILLEGAL USE

The registered companies use celebrities in their advertisement is in one side whereas on the other side some shops in different places of metros, cities, and towns bring advertisements in the form of banners in front of their shops. They use beautiful scenes, attractive lady models, flowers, animals, cartoons etc. in their advertisements. In recent days due to the existence of celebrity advertisements in various media, the local shop owners use celebrities in their banner advertisements in order to attract the attention of the audience or viewers towards their shop. Banners can be used as point of purchase advertisement, where the celebrity photos are used in the ads which induce the audience to purchase the product from that shop.

Shop owners use different celebrities depending on the nature of their business. In jewellery shops, they use beautiful and attractive female celebrities like Aiswarya Rai, Hansika, Nayanthara, Sneha, Oviya, Kushboo, Trisha, Asin etc. Now-a-days, in Tamilnadu, many jewellery shops use Aiswarya Rai, Nayanthara and Sneha pictures to attract the audience because they appear for Nakshatra and Saravana Thanga Maligai respectively. Shops also use these celebrities for easy recall and remembrance of their

shop name. Hair dressing shops use Sachin Tendulkar, Vijay, Rajini Kanth, Virat Kohli, and Kamal Hassan pictures in their ads which induce the viewing people to think of going to that specific shop for hair dressing whenever they think of hair dressing. These celebrities are pictured with different hair styles. Recent ads of silk and readymade shops use celebrities in the banners. In Tamil nadu Ajith, Vijay, Hansika, Oviya, Trisha, Sneha, Nayanthara, Asin and others are used by the Textile shop owners in their advertisements. Since these celebrities wear variety of dress materials in different movies and programmes, the shop owners assume that the audience will think of themselves with the celebrity and enter into the shop for purchasing. Before the opening of TASMAC Wine shops, many wine shop banners carried celebrities, especially cine actresses like Nayanthara, Trisha, Hansika in attractive postures to induce the intention of consuming the liquor. Apart from these shops other shops are also using the celebrities in their advertisements like Tea shops, Hotels, Workshops, Cosmetic shops, etc.

According to Atkin Block (1983) celebrity endorsers may be influential because they are viewed as highly dynamic and they have attractive and likeable qualities. Because of this several firms use celebrities in their advertisements by paying huge amount. Some companies use multiple celebrities to endorse their brand (Tamizhjyothi and Samudhra Rajakumar, 2011) by paying bigger amount and also yield better results. But without paying any amount to the celebrity, the small shop owners use them in their advertisements.

Authors of various books quoted that celebrity advertisement is an advertisement with celebrity after getting proper permission from him/her. And also any celebrity advertisements should be known by the celebrity without which they may sue case against them in the court. In this situation, these small shops owners, without the celebrity permission, use them in their advertisement. People may argue that these advertisements are not celebrity advertisement because they are not endorsing the shop or product. However, McCracken (1986) gave four ways of using celebrities in the advertisements namely explicit mode, implicit mode, imperative mode and co-present or passive mode. The co-present mode refers to the celebrity merely appears with the product which resembles the celebrity advertisement given by the small shop owners. Hence these banner ads in the shop are one of the celebrity advertisements.

Since any celebrity advertising is professional advertising, it should not be misused by others. Even though they use the advertisement in a particular place, it has some positive impact among the audience in that area (at least the shop can be recalled easily or attract immediate attention of the audience).

Points to Remember

In order to streamline these activities the following points should be remembered.

- (i) The government should instruct the shop owners to get permission from the celebrities by send the document in post/courier to the celebrity.
- (ii) The celebrities may also accept the request to use their picture in the advertisement at free of cost or at minimal cost based on the nature of business turnover.
- (iii) The government should form a committee in each state or district head quarters to deal about these activities. Hence they act as liaison between the celebrity and the shop owners.

Conclusion

Since celebrity advertising is the trend which many corporate follows not only in India but also in other foreign countries, the government should regulate these advertisement activities in a proper manner, so that the illegal use of celebrities in the advertisement can be eliminated. If the government incorporates the points mentioned here, then it can regulate the illegal use of celebrities in the advertisements. Future study should concentrate on the comparison of illegal usage of celebrities and authorized usage of celebrities in advertisements which will give a overview about the banning or regulation of illegal celebrity usage in advertisements.

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