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**BOOK REVIEW**

# MULTIPLE ENDORSEMENTS: AN OVERVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

*Celebrity endorsement is widely used advertising technique across the globe. It has its own merits and demerits. A trend of multiple endorsements i.e. same celebrity endorsing many products is on a rise and especially in Indian advertising world, it is more predominant. Authors have studied various opinions and views about the multiple endorsements by reviewing the literature available on this concept. After reviewing the literature on the aforesaid concept, authors found that most of the researchers are not in favor of multiple product endorsements by the same celebrity as it dilutes the impact and there is a loss of exclusivity of the celebrity with a particular brand. However, some researchers have mentioned that multiple endorsements will be inevitable and through creativity, ill effects of it can be managed.*

**Keywords:** Brand Recall, Celebrity, Celebrity Endorsements, Multiple Endorsements, Vampirism

## INTRODUCTION

Celebrity Endorsement is a quiet established concept and has become a common practice in Indian advertising industry. Companies are spending huge amounts to sign up the popular celebrities to endorse their products. They try to design their marketing mix in such a manner that it will have a positive impact on the present and prospective customers. To support this activity, many companies use 'celebrity endorsers' as a part of their marketing communication strategy. Thus, a use of celebrity as a source of communication, perhaps effective communication has become a common phenomenon. Knowing the possible risks associated with the celebrity endorsements, many companies are still lured by the celebrity magic. They are literally crazy for associating their brands with the leading celebrities and do not mind in pouring money on them. They believe that top celebrities have greater visibility and popularity amongst masses. Companies can expect maximum benefits by such association. Obviously every brand wants to associate with the one or a few leading celebrities who are at the top in their respective professions. As a result there is a huge demand-supply gap between number of leading celebrities available and number of brands interested in associating with these celebrities. Therefore, same celebrity is seen endorsing several products at a time. This phenomenon is referred as 'multiple endorsements' or 'multiple product endorsements'. Many scholars have studied different aspects of celebrity endorsement concept in detail. They have commented on the several benefits the brands can enjoy from the celebrities association and also cautioned about the certain risks associated with it. One of the major risks with celebrity endorsement is the multiple endorsements by same celebrity which results in a dilution of impact of that celebrity. Advertisers are afraid of the dilution and customers' confusion due to the same celebrity appearing simultaneously in several advertisements for similar or altogether different product categories or sometimes even in the advertisements of competing products. Although many researchers have studied various dimensions of celebrity endorsements, research on multiple product endorsements has not received significant attention. Research by Tripp, Jensen and Carlson (1994) is considered to be the first serious attempt to understand the effects of multiple product endorsements by celebrities on consumers' attitudes and intentions. Similarly, there is a lack of rigorous research on 'effects of multiple endorsements'. However, it has been observed that most of the researchers are not in

favor of multiple endorsements and they have criticized this practice. This review article presents a review of research work done by various scholars on 'multiple product endorsements'. It initially discusses the concept of celebrity endorsement, expected benefits to the advertisers' vis-à-vis potential risks from the celebrity endorsements, in a nutshell.

### Celebrity Endorsement – A Backdrop

#### Reasons behind Using Celebrities

Advertisers are leveraging celebrity appeal for quite a long time. They expect several benefits from the celebrity association. Instant appeal, transfer of personality traits to the brands, ability to lend credibility, trust and adding value to the brands, are some of the reasons why advertisers are in favor of the celebrity endorsements. They try to capture celebrities' presence in all possible manner to en-cash their popularity. Advertisers who invest heavily in celebrity endorsements believe that people always have some attraction and interest in 'Rich and Famous'. Effective celebrity advertising can do wonders for the brand as celebrities are not only recognized but also appreciated and liked by the masses.

#### Concept and Definition of Celebrity Advertising

Advertising is all about creativity. It is about reaching to the target audience and meeting intended objectives of the advertisers. Therefore, there is no fixed or one right way to do advertising. To make the advertising more creative and appealing, different strategies are used. Use of celebrity endorser is one of them. As an endorser, advertisers prefer those 'celebrities' which the majority of people admire or respect. The endorser can be even someone who is 'just like us', who can be even a 'satisfied customer' who speaks on behalf of the product and also shares his experience with the advertised product to build credibility. There is no legal or universally accepted definition of 'celebrity'. Different people perceive 'celebrity' in a different manner. According to Webster's dictionary, celebrity is a 'state or quality of being

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famous or much publicized person'. Some of the definitions of 'celebrity' and 'celebrity endorser' are - Friedman and Friedman (1979) refer to celebrities as individuals who are known to the public (including actors, sports figures, and entertainers) for their achievements in areas other than that of the product class endorsed. Kamins et al (1989) define celebrities as the individuals those are known to the public as an actor, sports figure or entertainer for his or her achievements in areas other than that of the product class endorsed. McCracken (1989); Silvera and Austad (2004), celebrities are people who enjoy public recognition and who often have distinctive attributes such as attractiveness and trustworthiness. Rojek (2001), celebrities are not only, through outstanding achievements or by some creation of cultural intermediaries, persons who are known because of their well-knownness, but they are also in a position to impact public consciousness.

### Benefits of the Celebrity Endorsements

Advertisers are motivated to use endorsers in order to affect the symbolic attributes associated with the product. They can raise the price if there is a favorable perception of symbolic attributes amongst the consumers and thus marketers can earn a higher mark-up for their products. In India, celebrity endorsements are believed to be particularly useful as the average consumers reportedly identify more strongly with celebrities than in any other countries.

While studying the concept and rational behind increasing trend of celebrity endorsements across a globe, researchers explore several dimensions of this concept. They summarize that celebrity endorsements are worthwhile investments in advertising considering the several benefits from this technique. Many researchers conclude that celebrities are best in drawing immediate consumer attention, generating high recall rates and creating and differentiating product images while generating sales and profits. Celebrity endorsements can help advertisers in the different situations for their products at different stages. The major benefits which are discussed by various researchers are listed below:

1. Breaking Clutter and Creating Awareness
2. Instant and Better Recall
3. Establishing Credibility and Aspiring Public Relations Leverage
4. Rub-off Effect
5. Meaning Transfer
6. Means of Product Differentiation
7. Help in Commodity Branding
8. Speed up 'Introduction' Stage of New Products and New Entrants in the Market

9. Defining, Refreshing, Reviving/ Mitigating Tarnished Brand Image

### Risks Associated with Celebrity Endorsements

Celebrity endorsements have some in-built risks. Celebrity endorsements can be extremely expensive not only in terms of actual monetary losses but also in terms of intangibles such as negative effect of celebrity on the brand image. The potential intangible risks also include a celebrity being involved in a controversy, the celebrity being overexposed through too many endorsement contracts, drop or loss of popularity or a change in the celebrity's image, etc. Researchers like Friedman and Friedman (1979), Ohanian (1991), Tripp et al, (1994) and Solomon (2002) who studied celebrity endorsements, its effectiveness and possible impact on the audience, have also warned the advertisers about the possible risks associated with the celebrity endorsements. Though, most research findings support the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement, the risks related to celebrities' negative information, multiple product endorsement and celebrity overshadow effect, etc. are also addressed by many researchers. Some serious issues and risks discussed by the researchers related to celebrity endorsements are listed below:

1. Celebrity's popularity and brand's shelf life
2. Personal life of celebrity and its effect on brand as well as society
3. Poor / dropping performance, inconsistency in the profession of the celebrities in the field
4. Effectiveness and actual purchase lead due to the celebrity advertisements
5. Social impact of celebrity advertisements  
Celebrity addiction
6. Celebrity – Brand personality mismatch
7. Vampirism effect - celebrity overshadowness
8. Multiple product endorsements

### Multiple Product Endorsements

Celebrity endorsement can be classified according to the number of products endorsed i.e. single product vs. multiple products. Single product endorsement refers to an endorsement by a celebrity for only one product or one brand. According to Tripp, et al (1994), single product endorsement constitutes distinctive actions since the celebrity endorses one brand and not other brands or products. Since a long, celebrities are likely to endorse more than one product; therefore single product endorsement is rare. Amongst the concerns shared by researchers and advertising practitioners, multiple product endorsements by

the same celebrity have been a major issue. Today, celebrities are seen endorsing any damn product to highly sophisticated product of small or big company. The novelty of a celebrity gets diluted if he appears in too many advertisements. This has led to 'commoditization' of celebrities who are willing to endorse anything for big bucks. These overused celebrities have a danger of diffusion association. Celebrities endorsing many brands create confusion in customers' mind. As a result, not all brands get expected benefits from the celebrity association.

### Reasons behind Multiple Endorsements

Companies from diverse fields insist on having top-most popular celebrities for their brands as they are eager to encash the popularity of leading film stars and sports personalities. Therefore, there is a race amongst the advertisers to trap the popular celebrity. This leads to multiple endorsements by same celebrity. Not all advertisers have deep pockets to afford the high price tag that comes along with exclusivity. With top celebrities endorsing several brands it becomes almost impossible for any company to get a celebrity exclusively for itself. Due to a huge gap between number of brands waiting for the celebrity association and availability of top celebrities, multiple product endorsement seems become obvious. Tripp et al (1994) refer to it as 'shared celebrities' who are used by different advertisers for promoting more than one brand. Sloan and Freeman (1988), Elliott (1991) also refer this phenomenon by calling it as 'shared stars'. Issue of multiple endorsements is not that serious in western countries as compared to India. In western countries, companies have a wider choice of celebrities. They are from variety of fields and yet having mass appeal and thus can be used for different segments or product categories. Common example is Tiger Woods. Though Tiger Woods is undoubtedly a 'Nike's Face', he was also simultaneously endorsing many other brands such as Buick, Gatorade, Gillete, Tag Heuer, American Express and Accenture. Advertisers can choose a celebrity from a list that contains actors, sports personalities, models, musicians, authors, comedians, business personalities, religious leaders, politicians, chefs, reporters, directors/producers, etc. Multiple endorsements are widely practiced in Asian countries. Japan and Korea are known for their strong affinity towards using celebrity endorsers (Choi et al 2005; Praet 2002). Approximately a quarter of Japanese and Korean celebrities appeared in the commercials for more than one product. Each celebrity is associated with approximately two to six products within or across categories in Japan and two to five in Korea. In India, advertisers have relatively a small set of potential endorsers having mass appeal. They are largely

from the world of film and cricket. As a result, the same celebrities are seen in many advertisements. Film legendary Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan and top cricket players like Sachin Tendulkar and M.S.Dhoni rule the endorsements world in India. They have so far endorsed several brands and they are still on the wish list of many advertisers. While studying the reasons behind multiple endorsements, it is also observed that due to fat endorsement contracts, when a celebrity is in demand, he is likely to be tempted to endorse more than one brand for more financial gains. During the Cricket World Cup in 2011 and after a grand success of Indian Cricket Team in the tournament, almost all Indian Cricket players are seen endorsing several products. Obviously star performers like Sachin Tendulkar, Captain M.S. Dhoni, Yuvraj Singh were seen endorsing many brands after Cricket World Cup 2011. Following table presents an indicative list of brands endorsed by these four top celebrities.

Sr. No	M.S. Dhoni	Sachin Tendulkar	Shah Rukh Khan	Amitabh Bachchan
1.	Aircel	Jaypee Cement	Pepsodent	Binani Cement
2.	Micromax	Toshiba	Nokia	Zen Mobile
3.	Orient Fans	Castrol	Fair & Handsome	Cadbury's Dairy Milk
4.	Reebok	adidas	Videocon	Tanishq
5.	BigBazaar	Amit Enterprises	Airtel	ICICI
6.	Lay's	Canon	Compaq	Himani Navratna Oil
7.	Titan Sonata	Boost	Dish TV	Dabur Chyawanprash
8.	Dabur Honey	Sunfeast	Lux	Reid & Taylor
9.	TVS	Airtel	Tag Heuer	Parker
10.	Videocon	Pepsi	Sunfeast	Pepsi

It is clear from this list that they endorse variety of products simultaneously. Therefore, it is very confusing for the audience to relate that celebrity with a particular brand. As a result there can be wrong or no recall for the few brands endorsed by that celebrity. Thus, multiple endorsements create confusion, clutter amongst the audience as well as dilution of celebrity impact.

Halve (2005) feels that there are some specific issues with using a celebrity endorser in India. Exclusive celebrity endorses a single brand or stays with that brand for a long and does not associate himself with any other similar or dissimilar product categories. However, having such exclusive endorser is not affordable to many advertisers. Hence they have to compromise with overused or shared



celebrity. Mowen and Brown (2001) call such exclusive endorsers as 'virgin endorsers'. They also opine that such virgin endorsers are highly expensive and also pose a practical question whether the endorsement of multiple products indeed tarnish a celebrity's effectiveness.

### Issues with Multiple Endorsements:

Top celebrities appear in several advertisements. This leads to overexposure of that celebrity, lack of exclusivity, a fair degree of confusion and little room for credibility and hence a possible devaluation amongst the customers. There is a celebrity clutter due to that. Information overload caused due to excessive use of the same or different stars across the same or different products can also lead to confusion among the consumers. Celebrity endorsing multiple products leaves the customers confused and leads to dilution in celebrities' value. Multiple product endorsement also has a negative impact on customers' purchasing intentions. Research by Tripp, Jensen and Carlson (1994) attempted to investigate the effects of multiple product endorsement by celebrities on customers' attitudes and intentions. Their research study is considered to be the first serious attempt to understand the effects of multiple product endorsements. Tripp et al (1994) find that the number of products one celebrity endorses negatively influences consumer perception of the endorser and the advertising itself. It is suggested that when as many as four products are endorsed, celebrity credibility and likeability, as well as attitude towards the advertisement, may lessen. In India, advertisers have a relatively small set of potential endorsers who have mass appeal. They are mostly from the world of film and cricket. One finds the same celebrity endorsing soft drinks (which are not good for health) and also promoting for social causes at the same time and thus can mislead public. This weakens the standing and credibility of a celebrity. Therefore, advertisers should take care while selecting the endorser whose image is not tarnished by the association with other products. Another reason why the celebrity impact is diluted is due to the potential mismatch between the celebrity personality and brand personalities that he is endorsing. It is difficult to see what specific personality traits the celebrity is contributing to each brand he is endorsing. In case of Film stars, this problem is made even more complicated because in their films, they themselves portray every possible personality trait. Therefore, which personality traits do consumers associate with a particular film star is a real problem? For example, Shah Rukh Khan portrayed different personalities in his films such as- Impulsive, fun-loving in some films and intense, virtuous in some films or even in negative roles such as obsessed, dark in films like Darr or Anjaam, and again

romantic, vulnerable in Devdas. So what traits one would associate with him? Till 1990's, it was not a serious problem as number of celebrity advertisements were limited. Whenever people used to think of Kapil Dev, they could quickly recall "Palmolive da jawaab nahin" or "Boost is the secret of my energy...our engery". Sunil Gavaskar had a strong association with Dinesh Suiting in consumers' mind. However, due to the media clutter and overused celebrities, it is difficult for the consumers to associate particular brand with particular celebrity. Existing and new categories are getting crowded. All brands across categories are competing for a space in the consumer's mind. For example, recently Mayur Suiting was endorsed by Salman Khan, Virendra Sehwag and Shah Rukh Khan in a span of hardly 2-3 years; therefore customers are unable to recall the association of Mayur Suiting with a particular celebrity. On the contrary, there is still a strong recall for Sunil Gavaskar and Dinesh Suiting even after 3 decades. Researchers point out that multiple endorsements affect the endorser's credibility. The endorsement of as many as four products negatively influences the celebrity's credibility, trustworthiness and likeability. It can happen due to lack of distinctiveness with one famous person enduring several products instead of concentrating on and representing one specific brand. Several researchers have addressed the issue of multiple endorsements and their possible impact on the buyers. Researchers such as Mowen and Brown (1981), Tripp (1990), Tripp, Jensen, and Carlson (1994), etc. opine that multiple endorsements might have negative effects on celebrities themselves as well as advertising and brand evaluation, and also the purchase intentions. Many researchers are against the multiple endorsements practice as they believe that due to that celebrities are overused, their exposure gets diluted and loses exclusivity. They also opine that the endorsement is not effective when celebrity endorses too many products. Overexposure leads to loss of exclusivity and hence credibility. It does not help capture attention of the target audience. At least not all brands endorsed by that celebrity gets the expected benefits.

### CONCLUSION

One of the major benefits of celebrity endorsements is that it provides a means of differentiation and the opportunity to create a distinct personality for a brand or product. When same celebrity endorses several products, the vary purpose of using this technique is defeated as multiple product endorsements lack distinctiveness. Due to the dilution of the impact of celebrity on the audience, not all brands endorsed by same celebrity enjoy the benefits. Consumers tend to recall only a few brands endorsed by the celebrity. They tend

to remember only those brands which are strong in themselves i.e. even without celebrity association, they are known amongst the consumers due to the better quality or some other aspects. Even when consumers find a perfect match between the brand personality and celebrity personality, they can easily connect with that celebrity advertisement and tend to remember that brand. In case of multiple endorsements, not all products personalities really match with the celebrity personality, so there may not be recall for those brands. It is more fatal if there is wrong brand recall due to the multiple endorsements. Thus, the huge amount spent on endorsements is not really a worthwhile investment for all brands associated with the same celebrity. Another serious concern is that multiple endorsements affect the endorser creditability as people know that a celebrity is paid to sell the product when he endorses many similar/different products simultaneously. Thus, the credibility especially trustworthiness of that celebrity is blurred. Though celebrity endorsements offer several benefits, there is no guarantee that every time it will work and will offer all expected benefits to the advertisers. When there is uncertainty about the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement itself, whether the use of multiple endorsements is justified? Researchers and practitioners are yet trying to get the satisfactory solution to this issue. Though ideally exclusive contract with the celebrity i.e. single product endorsements is highly beneficial and recommended, practically it is not possible due to the high price of that exclusivity. Another genuine difficulty is availability of celebrities who can do wonders for the brands (at least advertisers believe so). Perhaps in India, using different types of celebrities i.e. celebrities from diverse fields instead of relying too much on only film stars and cricket players, is one way out. Due to the availability of more number of celebrities, multiple endorsements can be reduced to some extent. Another way to minimize the negative effect of multiple endorsements is to enhance the creativity of the celebrity advertisements. According to Indian advertising guru R. Balkrishnan, consumers are not tired or confused about the same star endorsing various products, if each advertisement using same celebrity has a differentiated story. According to him, one should not really worry even though the same celebrity is endorsing multiple products if the advertisements are different and creative. However, whether mere creative advertisements will help in minimizing the ill effects of multiple endorsements is a debatable issue. Finally, a word of caution to the advertisers that they should not let the celebrities overshadow the brand(s) they are endorsing. Research by Tripp, et al states that as the celebrity remains

the constant in the multiple endorsements, his endorsements are generalized across products and due to this consumers may perceive that the nature of the celebrity is the reason for the endorsement and not the nature of the product being endorsed. Thus, in the multiple endorsements, focus remains on the 'celebrity' and not the 'product'. Celebrity overpowers or overshadows the brand and as a result consumers tend to recall only celebrity appearing in the advertisement and not the product. In this situation, advertisers do not gain anything out of this celebrity association as the 'brand - the real hero' takes the backseat.

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