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The effectiveness of celebrity endorsements in Polish magazines

Abstract

Due to several cognitive processes, celebrity endorsements are effective in increasing sales. The presence of a famous person in an advertisement can command extra attention which may translate into an increase in sales. The aim of the paper is to show the scale of popularity of endorsement in Polish press advertisements in selected magazines directed at different target groups. The study relies, in part, on qualitative content analysis, and uses a survey to determine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement as a marketing strategy in building trust around a given brand or product and the credibility of an advertising message among its target audience. The final section of the research presents the recall rates for brands/product and their endorsers. Generally, it has been found that celebrity endorsement as a marketing strategy more popular in Poland than in the USA, and a number of particular criteria have to be met in order for it to be efficient. The data reveal that the names of the endorsing celebrities are more strongly associated with advertised products and brands, than the products or brands with their endorsers' names.

Keywords: advertising, celebrity endorsement, press advertisements, trust and efficiency, advertising recall

JEL Classification: M31, M37

1. Introduction

The increase of the choices and variety of manufactured goods and services have induced significant changes in consumers' buying and consumption patterns. With creativity and innovation in marketing techniques, producers have begun to ascribe symbolic meanings to their products to position them competitively. Since the possession of a product has become a reflection of one's taste, aspirations, social status, and affiliation with particular groups, the functional aspect of a product is no longer its most important property. In order to cultivate a brand image, to increase its credibility, and to promote it more effectively, the advertisers rely on image-transfer strategy—the core assumption in celebrity endorsement.

The paper aims at assessing the scale of popularity of endorsement in Polish press advertisements in selected magazines directed at different target groups. The study relies, in part, on qualitative content analysis, and uses a survey to determine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement as a marketing strategy in building trust around a given brand or product and the credibility of an advertising message among its target audience. The final section of the research presents the recall rates for brands/product and their endorsers. It has been found that celebrity endorsement as a marketing strategy is not as popular as assumed, and a number of particular criteria have to be met in order for it to be efficient. Additionally, the study reveals that the names of the endorsing celebrities are more strongly associated with advertised products and brands, than the products or brands with their endorsers' names.

2. Literature Review

Since the popularity of the film stars of the 1910s and the 1920s, the audiences began to idolize and imitate the stars not only in clothing, hair, and makeup but also in mannerism and speech. With popular music and television, the popular musicians and TV personalities have also become role models for the viewers and listeners. In recent years, instead of talent and ability, their fan-base and recognizability have become important criteria of success and popularity i.e., the phenomena such as the Kardashian sisters and Paris Hilton. Famous people and celebrities serve as role models for the insecure young people who search for examples to follow. The advertisers have learned to exploit this tendency and developed it into a strategy called celebrity endorsement.

Endorsement is defined as a method of promoting a product that uses testimonials from satisfied customers—the endorsers. The endorsers are carefully chosen and employed in advertisements to reinforce the campaign and add credibility to the product (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). An endorser is also described as “any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement” (McCracken,

2005, p. 97). Generally, the literature distinguishes three main types of endorsers: lay or “typical consumer” endorsers, experts, and celebrities (Friedman & Friedman, 1979; McCracken, 2005). Lay endorsers act as ordinary users who confirm the efficiency of the product; the credibility of their message is based on the process of identification between them as message senders and the audience as message receivers. They can be defined as “initially unknown or fictitious individuals or characters used as spokespersons in an ad” (Tellis, 2004, p. 182). Experts are specialists who, due to their profession or experience, act as authorities in a given field. Celebrities are people that are recognized by the target audience for their achievements “in areas other than that of the product class endorsed” (Friedman & Friedman, 1979, p. 63). They are valued for their perceived attributes (image) and enjoy having a high profile and prestige. At this point, however, it has to be mentioned that “[t]here may be an especially large overlap between endorsers used as experts and celebrities” (Tellis, 2004, p. 182). With enough exposure, experts presented in TV programmes also become famous and popular among large audiences. Those endorsers acting as celebrities and experts at the same time are referred to as “celebrity-expert” endorsers (Tellis, 2004).

The ways in which testimonials are given are different and depend on the level of a celebrity’s involvement in an advertisement. In the explicit mode, the message of the endorser is clear—I endorse the product. The tone of the message is stronger in the imperative mode—You should use this product. In the implicit mode, the celebrity employed to endorse will make potential customers want to buy by making a public declaration: I use it. In some cases, it is only suggested that the celebrity actually uses and enjoys the product without any verbal testimonial (McCracken, 1989, p. 310).

Researchers have shown that customers’ buying decisions are influenced by celebrity endorsements (Cashmore, 2006; Jayanthi & Chandrashekar, 2015). The belief that a celebrity endorsement is an effective tool in increasing brand awareness and in shaping a brand or product image is based on the following three assumptions:

- (1) A celebrity will attract attention and arouse interest in the brand or the product itself, facilitating brand awareness and brand recall;
- (2) Celebrities’ image and attributes will encourage the audience to follow the example, to aspire to it, as it is stimulating to identify with someone who is admired;
- (3) If the audiences are familiar with a celebrity, that celebrity can help to get the message across faster, and the value associated with the celebrity is transferred to the brand. This is helpful in creating an image that can be easily referred to by the consumers (Sharma & Kumar, 2013).

The presence of a celebrity in an advertisement provides several important benefits over unknown endorsers (Charbonneau & Garland, 2005). The most important advantage is that “celebrities help advertisements stand out among the surrounding clutter, thus improving their communicative ability” (Atkin & Block, 1983, p. 39). This is also supported by other specialists in the field (Dyson & Turco, 1998; Erdogan, 1999) who claim that in comparison with other endorser

types, famous people dictate a greater degree of attention and recall as they easily “break through media clutter and hold viewers’ attention” (Peetz & Lough, 2016, p. 132). The attractiveness of the endorsers enhances the desire and willingness to purchase a promoted product. The source attractiveness model assumes that consumers aspire to the values and lifestyles of the celebrities. The model “proposes that information from an attractive source is accepted because of the consumer desire to identify with that source” (Charbonneau & Garland, 2005, p. 2). It has been noted that in the case of a celebrity, “people not only find a piece of themselves, but also a piece of what they strive for” (Ewen, 1998, p. 96). Celebrity endorsement largely acts via the halo effect, and the cognitive process of meaning transfer. The halo effect theory defines the phenomenon as “a process of cognitive bias that leads individuals to ascribe particular traits to others based upon some observed characteristic” (Thorndike, 1920, p. 25). The underlying assumption is that celebrity endorsers bring their own symbolic meanings to the endorsement process and the cultural meanings associated with the celebrity, e.g. status, class, and lifestyle, become associated with the products (McCracken, 1989).

From the communicative perspective, it can be stated that advertisers hire famous people assuming that the audience will first “consume” the images of celebrities, and then “consume” products associated with those celebrities, hence, the image of the star that originally developed independently transfers first onto the product and then, from product to consumer (Charbonneau & Garland, 2005, p. 3). In light of Puppel’s (2016, pp. 117–118) communicative theory of human image, as opposed to “full-figure image strategy”, celebrity endorsement makes use of the “façade image strategy”, which focuses on a selected property, such as, for example, physical attractiveness of the celebrity. Additionally, following Puppel’s (2016, p. 111) theory of human image management, which introduces a distinction between “static” and “dynamic” image, it can be stated that celebrities’ static image (already shaped and fixed) is used to dynamically shape the image of a brand. In a well-tailored campaign, this strategy may positively influence the perception of a brand, giving it more respect and admiration (Till, 1998). Through association, the brand establishes credibility and immediate recognition. As a result, the desired brand repositioning, and consequently, an improvement in sales may be observed (Erdogan, 1999).

Many theories have been developed for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of hiring a potential spokesperson for a company. The wrong choice may result in an improper positioning, loss of credibility or a decline in sales, thus, an effective tool is needed to tailor the endorsement campaign. Marketers frequently use the FRED principle—a model that encompasses the four fundamental aspects of endorsement: familiarity, relevance, esteem, and differentiation. Familiarity refers to the fact that the endorser is known to the widest audience possible. Moreover, it is advisable that the endorser is regarded as credible, sincere, and trustworthy. Relevance points to the need for a meaningful link between the brand, the celebrity, and the target audience. Additionally, it is recommended that the audience can identify with the endorser as identification facilitates acceptance of the message, increases trust in the brand, and encourages purchase. Esteem is

transferring a celebrity's reputation onto a product. It works when the celebrity is respected by the public for their distinguished careers or lifestyles. Differentiation aims at developing a unique product. Since the market offers such a wide range of similar products that it may be difficult to differentiate between brand A and brand B, attaching a celebrity to a brand differentiates it from the competing brands. A product may not get the audience's attention, a celebrity does. Consequently, the product acquires a unique image and stands out among the competing products. However, FRED is no guarantee for success. It may only be used as a helpful guideline in the process of selecting the best endorser.

A considerable body of literature has addressed the weaknesses and shortcomings of celebrity endorsement (Dyson & Turco, 1998; Erdogan & Kitchen, 1998; Erdogan, 1999; Garland & Ferkins, 2003; James & Ryan, 2001; Tripp, Jensen & Carlson, 1994). For instance, the multiplicity of advertisements with celebrity endorsers may lead to overexposure. Celebrities endorsing multiple products may affect the impact and distinctiveness of each product relationship and diminish "consumer perceptions of celebrity credibility and likeability" (Charbonneau & Garland, 2005, p. 1). Jayanthi and Chandrashekar (2015) counter these warnings of overexposure and overuse of celebrities by claiming that even though the multiplicity of endorsement may cause confusion in some, the average consumer can read the message clearly. The key to effective celebrity advertising is in the compatibility between the celebrity image and the product (Kamins, 1990; Pornpitakpan, 2003). However, getting the right celebrity-product match-up and celebrity-target audience match-up is a challenging task. Another dimension that is difficult to control is the public perception of the celebrity. An undesired or a negative change in the celebrity's image may lead to a loss of public favour and, as a consequence, a decline in the appeal and credibility of the endorser. Additionally, in the case of big names from the world of show business, there is a risk of the celebrity overshadowing the brand. This issue has to be carefully considered in the selection process. Finally, from the financial perspective, the cost of hiring the celebrity may be too high to turn into a profitable campaign. From a practitioners' point of view, the most important factors taken into consideration by marketers in English advertising agencies, apart from the celebrity's overall image, celebrity-target audience and brand match-up, were cost, trustworthiness, controversy risk, prior endorsements, and celebrity familiarity/likeability (Charbonneau & Garland, 2005, pp. 3–4). It should be added that the importance of any given factor depends heavily on the type of product endorsed, and the research findings are ambivalent concerning whether consumers are more likely to purchase goods and services endorsed by celebrities (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1995; Dyson & Turco, 1998; Erdogan & Kitchen, 1998).

3. The Present Study

The aim of the first part of the present research, based on a quantitative analysis, is to verify the actual scale of popularity of celebrity endorsements in the selected women's magazines in Poland. The chosen magazines are aimed at different target audiences.

The second part of the research, which is based on a questionnaire, aims at establishing whether female magazine readers perceive celebrity endorsement as an effective way of building trust around a given brand or product and whether it increases the credibility of the advertising message among the audience. Additionally, two questions were asked about the foreign celebrities with international fame that were employed to advertise Polish products.

The focus of the third part of the research is the aided recall for the purpose of estimating the accuracy in associating a brand with its celebrity endorser and *vice versa*.

3.1. Methodology and Findings

The empirical evidence for the quantitative analysis were gathered in Poland in May 2015 and comprised 624 print ads targeted at women. These ads were published in three types of widely available magazines directed at different groups of women:

- (1) Glossy magazines—150 pages or more, relatively expensive, printed on high-quality paper, targeted at middle and upper-middle class working women.
- (2) How-to magazines targeted at home-makers—carrying advice on everyday problems connected with family life, running the home, keeping fit and keeping the family healthy, including articles presenting the lives of ordinary women.
- (3) Gossip magazines—100 pages or less, inexpensive, containing a lot of pictures, and short articles about the private lives of the celebrities.

The purpose of the qualitative analysis was to assess the percentage of advertisements using the celebrity endorsement technique and to determine which of the two common types of celebrity endorsers were used in these ads. The two common types being:

- (1) A classic celebrity endorsement where a celebrity is professionally unconnected with the advertised brand or product.
- (2) A celebrity-expert endorsement where a celebrity's profession or occupation brings him or her into the position of an expert in the field.

The glossy magazines in the sample carried 259 ads. Among these 46 (17.76%) featured a celebrity (see Table 1.).

Table 1. Glossy Magazines with Celebrity Endorsements

Magazine	Number of Ads.	Classic Celebrity Ads.	Celebrity-Expert Ads.
<i>Grazia</i>	48	9	1
<i>Pani</i>	56	8	1
<i>Twój Styl</i>	72	11	1
<i>Wysokie Obcasy</i>	23	2	0
<i>Zwierciadło</i>	60	11	1
Total	259 (100%)	41 (15.83%)	5 (1.93%)

Among the how-to magazines, there were 216 ads, and 16 (12.03%) of these featured a celebrity (see Table 2.).

Table 2. How-to Magazines with Celebrity Endorsements

Magazine	Number of Ads.	Classic Celebrity Ads.	Celebrity-Expert Ads.
<i>Claudia</i>	51	6	0
<i>Kobieta i Życie</i>	34	2	1
<i>Olivia</i>	42	3	2
<i>Poradnik Domowy</i>	43	3	4
<i>Świat Kobiety</i>	46	2	3
Total	216 (100%)	16 (7.40%)	10 (4.63%)

The gossip magazines in the study contained 149 ads, 30 (20.14%) of these featured a celebrity (see Table 3.).

Table 3. Gossip Magazines with Celebrity Endorsements

Magazine	Number of Ads.	Classic Celebrity Ads.	Celebrity-Expert Ads.
<i>Viva</i>	37	6	1
<i>Party</i>	30	3	2
<i>Show</i>	29	6	0
<i>Flesz</i>	28	3	2
<i>Gala</i>	25	6	1
Total	149 (100%)	24 (16.11%)	6 (4.03%)

At the end of the twentieth century, the share of advertisements with celebrity endorsers was rising. In the year 1979, one in every six (16%) advertisements in the USA presented a celebrity (Howard, 1979), in 1988, it was one in five (20%) (Motavali, 1988), in 1997, it was one in four (25%) (Erdogan, 1999; Shimp, 1997). More recent studies, however, reveal that the percentage of advertisements featuring celebrities in the USA has declined and amounts to 10% with regards to TV commercials (Daboll, 2011) and 9.5% to magazine adverts (Belch & Belch, 2013).

According to the data for the present study, 16.34% of advertisements in the women's magazines in Poland presented a well-known person. This is more than in the U.S. magazines. It is also evident that the number of print advertisements featuring celebrities is determined by the target audience. Consequently, the

celebrity endorsements make up for 20% of the ads in the gossip magazines. For the glossy magazines, these ads constitute less than 18%, and in the how-to magazines, only 12 % of the ads are celebrity endorsements. The data also show that the use of the celebrity-expert (mainly chefs and cooks) is substantially less popular (20.6%) than a classic celebrity (79.4%) in the category of celebrity endorsement.

3.2 Survey results

The second part of the research employed a questionnaire as a tool for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of eight close-ended, and two open-ended questions. The questions concerned such issues as the credibility and trustworthiness of the endorser, endorser-product match-up in the context of nationality, the multiplicity of endorsement, and the actual influence of celebrities' endorsement on the purchase behaviour as well as the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement were measured using consumers' recall.

Since the study focuses on women's magazines, and it has been shown that women are responsible for 80% of home improvement purchases, 66% of computer buys, 55% of electronic purchases, 60% of new car purchases, and 53% of investment purchases (Barletta, 2006, p. 56), the sample consisted of 112 women aged 23–25.

Q1. Do you think that brands which employ well-known individuals to advertise a product are more credible?

Out of 112 respondents, 73% did not see a link between being well-known and being credible. The remaining 27% said that for them, well-known endorsers are more credible.

Q2. Whose testimonial for a product of everyday use (e.g. cosmetics, food products) would you trust the most?

In this question, the respondents could choose from five alternatives. These were: a well-known actor/actress, an unknown person with a medical degree, someone you know in person, an unknown regular user of the product, a well-known sportsperson. The choices for the most trusted were:

- 50% Someone they know in person
- 35% An unknown person with a medical degree
- 9% A well-known actor/actress
- 5% An unknown regular user of the product
- 0% A well-known sportsperson

The data show that the most trustworthy is someone personally known, followed by experience and expertise. Being famous or being unknown fails to make the endorser trustworthy. These responses are consistent with the answers for the first item on the instrument.

Q3. Do you think that celebrities who advertise a given product actually use it in their private life?

The majority of the sample (82%) stated that they doubted whether the celebrity endorsers used the promoted product. Only 18% of the respondents trusted that the product was used by its endorser.

Q4. Do you think that a person advertising a number of diverse products is credible?

A clear majority of the respondents (89%) did not find the endorser of a number of diverse products credible. Two interpretations are possible of these responses. First, the lack of credibility may stem from overexposure. Second, the audience is aware that it is difficult to be a real expert in many different fields.

Q5. In an advertisement, you are more likely to believe a famous actor/actress of (a) Polish origin, (b) foreign origin with international fame.

In this statement about trustworthiness, the context of national versus international fame was employed. Out of 112 respondents, 65% were more likely to trust a famous actor/actress of Polish origin. The results are congruent with the relevance dimension of the FRED principle, i.e., when the audience can identify with the endorser, the message is accepted more easily and there is a higher level of trust in a brand.

Q6. Do you find the presence of Monica Bellucci in the commercial of Cisowianka Perlage and Kevin Spacey in the commercial of WBK Bank natural?

This question referred to the specific use of international celebrities in advertisements and commercials for Polish products. The data show that 80% of the respondents fail to find the presence of the Italian actress in the advertisement for Polish sparkling water, and the American actor in the advertisement for a Polish bank natural. Probably, the chance of Bellucci choosing Cisowianka, and Spacey opening an account in a Polish bank was estimated as slight, i.e., the celebrity-product match-up condition was not met.

Q7. Have you ever bought a product which you had chosen because of the celebrity who advertised it?

Only 22% of the respondents said, yes, while 78% said no. It is evident that on a conscious level, the audience feels unaffected by celebrities' testimonials. Further research with similar samples may shed more light on the influence of the celebrity endorsement on consumer behavior.

3.3. Recall results

It has been shown that celebrities speaking in an advertisement generate more attention, improve brand awareness, and achieve high recall rates. In marketing, advertising recall is one of the key measures for determining the effectiveness of an ad, and an important test to measure whether the information in the ad has been processed into long-term memory (Turley & Shannon, 2000, p. 325). Interestingly, research results show that memory traces for advertisements can last for 11 years or longer (Bozinoff & Dacin, 1985).

Recall can be measured as aided or unaided. An aided approach assumes that respondents are given the name of a product or brand and are asked to recall its advertisement. In an unaided recall test, the respondents are provided with a category and asked to recall any advertisements in the category. Naturally, unaided recall is more challenging and usually gets lower scores than aided recall (Berkman & Gilson, 1987). Recall measurement may be narrowed down to a specific context, e.g. TV commercials, print advertisements, radio commercials, or outdoor advertisements. In the present research, the participants were first asked to match 10 national or international celebrities with 10 products. Names of the celebrities and brands were provided to the respondents.

QA. Can you provide the name of the brand which is advertised by the following well-known people?

Table 4. Aided Recall of Celebrities and Brands

Celebrity	Brand	Correct Recalls	Incorrect Recalls*
Kuba Wojewódzki	Play	32	2
Anja Rubik	Apart, CCC	31	2
Tomasz Karolak	Orange, Orlen	27	5
Marek Kondrat	ING	21	3
Magda Gessler	Prymat, Ludiwk, Ulgix	19	5
Joanna Koroniewska	Wojas, Avon, Koral	17	8
Adam Małysz	Goplana, Red Bull, Teekanne	12	4
Antonio Banderas	Orbit	11	1
Kate Moss	Rimmel	9	3
Krystyna Janda	Janda	0	3
Total		179	36

* Providing the names of competitors or different brands was coded as an incorrect recall.

In the case of a celebrity endorsing more than one brand, every correct brand name was counted. The 112 respondents recalled a total of 215 advertising messages, of which 179 (83.2 %) were correct.

QB. Can you provide the name of a well-known person endorsing the following brands?

In the case of brands endorsed by more than one celebrity, giving at least one correct name was counted as a correct recall. The 112 respondents gave a total of 130 answers with names of the endorsers. Here, 125 (96%) of the recalls were correct and only 5 (4%) were incorrect.

Table 5. Aided Recall of Endorsed Brands

Brand	Celebrities	Correct Recalls	Incorrect Recalls*
Vizir	Zygmunt Chajzer	37	0
T-mobile	Anna Lewandowska, Robert Lewandowski, Tomasz Kot	30	0
Lidl	Karol Okrasa, Pascal Brodnicki, Borys Szyc	30	0
Credit Agricole	Juliette Binoche	8	0
Oriflame	Anna Mucha	7	2
Loreal	Jennifer Lopez, Anna Mucha	6	0
Amica	Agnieszka Radwańska	4	0
Polbank	Justyna Kowalczyk	2	2
Lancôme	Julia Roberts	1	0
Tous	Małgorzata Socha	0	1
Total		125	5

* Providing the names of competitors or different brands was coded as an incorrect recall.

Overall, it is clear that aided recall rates are higher for the celebrities' names triggered by the brand name than for brand names triggered by the celebrity's name. On the basis of the present data, one may argue that since a celebrity holds a stronger association with the brand than the brand ascribed to the celebrity, a company may employ a celebrity to endorse its brand. In the case of some undesired image change of the celebrity or a brand failure, the failure is linked to the celebrity and not the product. When a brand fails, it is easily transferred to the celebrity's reputation, and will adversely influence his or her image, whereas, in the case of celebrities' reputations being damaged, the brand names they endorse are not so easily recalled. The very high recall rates for celebrities' names triggered by the brand name boost the efficiency of the endorsement strategy through image, value, and credibility transfer.

4. Conclusions

Several inferences and deductions are possible for the above research. First, in terms of the frequency of occurrence, the use of celebrity endorsement in Polish print advertising is more popular than in U.S. magazines. Second, the number of ads featuring celebrities is determined by the target audience and magazine types. Considering the persuasive force of celebrity endorsement as a marketing

technique, according to the sample of the present study, the presence of a celebrity in an advertisement does not increase the level of trust towards the brand. Moreover, the respondents doubt whether celebrities actually use the products they advertise. The familiar people and the real experts are trusted more than the celebrities. Only a limited level of trust is granted to endorsers who advertise a number of different products/brands. A higher level of trust is granted to endorsers of the same origin/nationality as the target audience and, as a result, the presence of foreign celebrities with an international appeal in advertisements for the local products is perceived as unnatural. The data results explicitly show that endorsers' names are strongly associated with advertised products and brands, whereas particular products or brands are not so easily associated with names of endorsers. Consequently, in terms of image, it is more perilous for a celebrity to advertise a risky product than for a brand to be endorsed by an inappropriate celebrity. Generally, the respondents claim, contrary to advertisers' claims, that their purchase behaviours are uninfluenced by celebrity endorsement.

In future studies along the line of this undertaking, other types of advertisements (TV commercials and ads on radio) may be examined to gain a better understanding of the impact of celebrity endorsements. It may also be worthwhile to conduct similar studies among the male audience, audiences of different ages, and LGBT groups to identify potential differences in the approach to celebrity endorsement. The results of such research may prove beneficial to the producers of ads who need to take into account the audience's opinions and attitudes while designing their advertising messages.

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