

# Understanding the Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsements

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## Abstract

In this age of information, where consumers encounter promotional messages extensively, it is difficult for an advertisement to be effective. Celebrity endorsement is a strategy that many firms adopt, hoping that it would help them in overcoming this problem. However, not all celebrity endorsements deliver the desired results and significant resources get wasted. What are the benefits of using celebrity endorsers? Why are celebrity endorsers effective? What are the different factors that determine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements? What is the relative importance of these factors? This paper tries to answer these questions through literature review and a qualitative research undertaken in the Indian context.

**Keywords:** Celebrity endorsers, Meaning Transfer, Match-up, Source Attractiveness, Source Credibility.

## 1. Introduction

Use of celebrities in advertisements is an increasing phenomenon worldwide. They are now used for endorsing different product categories. Celebrity endorsers are extremely popular in Japan and Korea (Kilburn, 1998). Celebrity endorsers are also popular in USA, UK, India, Malaysia, Turkey and New Zealand (Millward Brown, 2007; Money, Shimp, and Sakano, 2006). In USA, celebrities appear in almost 25 percent of the advertisements (Shimp, 2008). In India, according to a report by FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry), 60 percent of Indian brands used celebrities in 2008 whereas it was only 25 percent in 2001 (Shashidhar, 2008). FICCI also estimated that roughly six billion Rupees are spent each year as endorsement fees of celebrities.

According to McCracken (1989) a celebrity endorser is "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement" (p. 310). Celebrity endorsers have gained popularity because they are traditionally viewed as being dynamic, and having

attractive and likeable qualities, and their fame is perceived to attract attention (Atkin and Block, 1983). They are used for promoting existing products, to reinforce and reposition brand images and to introduce new brands. Researchers have also discussed potential hazards of celebrity endorsements as it can be a double edged sword (Erdogan, 1999). When the celebrity overshadows the product being endorsed, loose popularity or gets involved in a scandal, then the product endorsed can severely suffer, and this results in the failure of the endorsement campaign and huge amount of funds and resources gets wasted (Cooper, 1984; Till and Shimp, 1998). Considering potential benefits, the high cost and risks associated with celebrity endorsements, the study explores various aspects of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements.

There are five main objectives of the study. First, to explore the factors that are affected by celebrity endorsements (benefits of celebrity endorsements); second, to understand the rationale behind the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers by reviewing various underlying theories; third, to explore various factors that determine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers; fourth, to assess the applicability of the identified factors and theories in the Indian scenario; and, last, to gauge the relative importance of identified factors. To accomplish the first three objectives, past research regarding celebrity endorsements was reviewed. For the last two objectives, a qualitative research in the Indian scenario was undertaken.

## 2. Factors Affected by Celebrity Endorsements

Celebrity endorsements affect many factors which directly or indirectly impact sales of the product (Erdogan, 1999). According to Atkin and Block (1983) the fame of the celebrity endorsers helps in drawing attention to the product. Belch and Belch (2001) termed it as stopping power, which means that celebrity endorsers are able to break through the cluttered media environment and draw attention towards the advertising message. Kamen, Azhari and Kragh (1975) reported that use of celebrity

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endorser leads to greater awareness of advertisements and positive change in the company image. Louie and Obermiller (2002) found that selection/rejection and retain/dismissing decisions regarding celebrity endorsers has significant impact on the company's image. Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann (1983) manipulated endorser type and found that celebrity endorsers lead to greater recall of brand name as compared to typical citizens, and produced more favourable attitude towards the product than typical citizens. Friedman, Termini and Washington (1976) manipulated endorser type and found that celebrity endorser enhanced the believability of the advertisement, purchase intentions and perceived quality of the product. Friedman and Friedman (1979) manipulated endorser type and product class. They found that celebrity treatment produced greater recall for both advertisement and brand name, regardless of the product class.

The benefits of celebrity endorsers is evident from many successful examples such as, Michael Jordan for Nike, Hanes, Kobe Bryant for ADIDAS, David Beckham for H&M, Catherine Zeta Jones for T-Mobile, Nicole Kidman for Chanel and Tiger Woods for Rolex. In India, Coca Cola found that the recall rate of its campaign featuring Hrithik Roshan went from 20% to 40 % among the target audience. Further, S Kumar's, a textile company, calculated that it will incur at least 40% less, simply due to hiring Hrithik as a brand ambassador (Dasgupta and Bansal, 2001). Home Trade, a financial service portal, also found that using Hrithik led to considerable increase in the number hits on its portal. Coca Cola also reported that its sales benefited after its "Thanda Matlab Coca Cola" campaign featuring Aamir Khan (The Economic Times, 2003). Other successful examples include Amitabh Bachchan for Parker, Cadbury, SRK for Santro and Sachin for Boost, Pepsi.

There is consensus among researchers as well as practitioners regarding the use of celebrity endorsers as a powerful way of achieving greater consumer attention, awareness and recall. But the power of celebrity endorsers in achieving positive attitudes and purchase intentions for the endorsed brand has been questioned by some studies. For example, Mehta (1994) did not find significant differences in the effect of celebrity endorser and non celebrity endorser on attitudes (towards advertisement and brand) and purchase intentions for the endorsed brand. Freiden (1984) also manipulated endorsers (Celebrity, Typical Consumer, CEO and Expert) and

found mixed results. Further, several unsuccessful examples can also be found across the globe. In India, some of the biggest stars failed to deliver the desired results for the endorsed brands. Some examples include SRK for Lux, Amitabh for Versa and Nerolac Paints, Virat for Fair and Lovely and Sachin for Palio. These contradicting studies and examples suggest that there may be several factors which determine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers, especially in influencing attitudes and behavioural intentions. Some of the major factors are discussed in the next sections of the paper.

### 3. Theories of Celebrity Endorsement Effectiveness

#### 3.1 Source models

*3.1.1 Source Credibility:* Source credibility implies the spokesperson's positive characteristics which affects the receiver's acceptance of the message (Khan and Khan, 2002). The idea behind the model is that if the source of the message is considered credible then the message will be evaluated positively and it will have greater persuasiveness. Credible sources influence attitudes, beliefs and behaviour through "internalization". Internalization occurs when individuals conform to the attitude and behaviour advocated by a credible source because they believe in the substance of new attitude or behaviour (Freidman and Friedman, 1979). Once these attitudes or behaviour gets internalized, they remain in the minds of the consumers even after the message or the source is forgotten. The source credibility model proposed by Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1953) states that Expertise and Trustworthiness are two important factors from which credibility originates.

"Expertise" is the extent to which the source is perceived to have the ability of making correct assertions by virtue of having the relevant skills (Hovland et al., 1953). This dimension is also sometimes referred as competence, authoritativeness, expertness and qualification (Khan and Khan, 2002). A study by Crisci and Kassinove (1973) reported that the compliance of the respondents to the recommendations made by the source directly varies with the perceived level of expertise. A source perceived more expert generated more intentions to buy the brand (Ohanian, 1991). Expert endorser produced positive brand attitude and greater purchase intent than non-expert endorser in an experiment by Till and Busler (1998).

"Trustworthiness" is the degree to which the audience considers the communicator and the assertions to be valid. Consumers are sceptical regarding untrustworthy

celebrities (Smith, 1973). McGinnies and Ward (1980) studied trust worthiness and expertise and found that trust worthy source was persuasive, regardless of expertise. Contrarily, study by Sternthal, Dholakia and Leavitt (1978) found that a high credible source is not always more effective than a low credible source. They found that if the initial opinion of the audience is positive towards the issue, than a less credible source is more effective.

**3.1.2 Source Attractiveness:** Joseph (1982) states that more favourable evaluations of the product and the advertisement are made when attractive models are used. Attractive sources persuade consumers through a process called "identification". Identification occurs when consumers adopt attitudes and behaviour advocated by the source because they get satisfaction in the idea of being similar to the source (Friedman and Friedman, 1979). Identification is not like internalization where information from an attractive source is integrated into the belief system of the consumers; the consumers may conform only till the source remains relevant or attractive to them (Kelman, 1961).

Petty and Cacioppo (1980) found that the source attractiveness affects persuasion in both low and high consumer involvement conditions. The product, when endorsed by the attractive celebrity, resulted in greater brand recall, positive attitude towards product and greater purchase intention than the unattractive celebrity (Kahle and Homer, 1985). Till and Busler (1998) found that purchase intentions and brand attitude were significantly higher in attractive endorser condition than unattractive endorser condition.

Majority of studies have supported the positive relation between source attractiveness and attitudes, but results regarding the relation between purchase intention and source attractiveness are ambiguous (Erdogan, 1999). Further, except the study by Till and Busler (1998), literature suggests that attractive endorsers are effective only for attractiveness related products (Kahle and Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1990; Baker and Churchill, 1977; Petty and Cacioppo, 1980). Source models fail to clearly explain the endorsement effectiveness process as they consider it as a uni-dimensional process. They concentrate only on the celebrity aspect, ignoring the product and consumer aspects. McCracken (1989) states that, "According to the model, the persuasiveness of the celebrity has everything to do with the celebrity and nothing to do with the product." (p. 311). They fail to explain why some celebrities prove successful for a particular product and disaster for other products. They also fail in differentiating between celebrities; two celebrities cannot be equally good for the same product even if they are equally attractive and credible. This means that apart from credibility and attractiveness, there are other dimensions also that differentiate celebrities and thereby affect the celebrity endorsement process. Ohanian (1990) developed and tested a fifteen-item semantic differential scale for measuring celebrity credibility. It has three dimensions of attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise. The five point scale was late used in many studies to measure source credibility (See Table: 1).

**Table 1: Source Credibility Scale (Ohanian, 1990)**

Attractiveness	Trustworthiness	Expertise
Attractive-Unattractive	Trustworthiness	Expert-Not Expert
Classy-Not Classy	Dependable-Undependable	Experienced-Inexperienced
Beautiful-Ugly	Honest-Dishonest	Knowledgeable-Unknowledgeable
Elegant-Plain	Reliable-Unreliable	Qualified-Unqualified
Sexy-Not Sexy	Sincere-Insincere	Skilled-Unskilled

### 3.2 *The match-up hypothesis*

Match-up hypothesis states that for an advertisement to have a positive impact on believability, attitudes and behavioural intentions, there should be a 'fit' between the product and the celebrity endorser. This 'fit' or 'match-up' is the congruency between the message conveyed by the image of the celebrity and the product image (Kamins, 1990). If there is no distinct and specific relation between the celebrity and the product being endorsed, then it will have negative impact as consumers will remember the celebrity but not the product. This phenomenon is termed as 'Vampire Effect' (Evans, 1988). The social adaptation theory states that the impact of information depends upon its adaptive significance, and acquisition of new information will help consumers to adapt. Therefore when an attractive celebrity is used for an attractiveness related product, then he/she adds more adaptive information about the product as compared to an unattractive celebrity (Kahle and Homer, 1985; Kamins 1990). Attractiveness, expertise and image of the celebrity are the match-up factors proposed by researchers.

Attractiveness match-up means using attractive celebrity for an attractiveness related product. The study by Kahle and Homer (1985) supported the match-up hypothesis for attractiveness. Baker and Churchill (1977) found that unattractive female model generated more purchase intentions for coffee and attractive female model generated more purchase intentions for Perfume/Aftershave. Kamins (1990) found in his experiment that physically attractive celebrity was significantly more effective in influencing believability, attitudes and purchase intentions than physically unattractive celebrity for attractiveness related product and there was no significant impact of physical attractiveness when the product was attractiveness unrelated.

In expertise match-up, a celebrity who is perceived "expert" in the field is used for endorsing a product related to that particular field, for example, an athlete endorsing an energy drink or sports shoes. Till and Busler (1998) studied both attractiveness and expertise as match-up factors. They found that expertise is a more powerful factor for match-up as attractive endorser was found to be effective in both the situations of attractiveness related and attractiveness unrelated products.

Image based match-up is matching celebrity associations with brand associations. Misra and Beatty (1990) tested image based congruence by matching the products (jeans

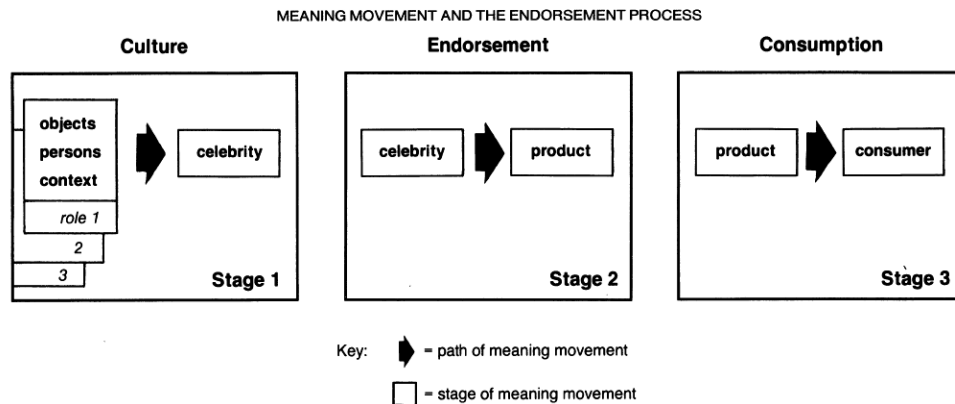
and a board game) with celebrities having similar images respectively; significant positive impact on brand attitude was found. Kamins and Gupta (1994) matched the product (computer) with a celebrity who was perceived to be scientific and found positive impact on variables such as, brand attitude and spokesperson believability. Another study by Lee and Thorson (2008) also supported the positive effects of image based match-up on attitudes and purchase intentions.

The match-up hypothesis tells us how to make celebrity endorsements effective, but it is not free from criticism. It does not explain the degree of fit or match which may exist between a celebrity and the product; it simply compares a "match" with a "non match" and thus ignores the continuum across different celebrities. In real situations, there are several celebrities who match with the brand but the advertiser seeks the one who is a better match than others. Further, if a celebrity endorser is being used to reposition the brand, then little bit of incongruence between the celebrity and the brand is bound to exist, and may also be necessary for changing the perception regarding the brand. Thus strictly adhering to match-up will not be a successful strategy in this situation (Ang and Dubelaar, 2006).

### 3.3 *Meaning transfer model*

According to meaning transfer model (McCracken, 1989), the cultural meanings associated with the celebrity make an endorsements work. Each celebrity holds distinct cultural meanings which he or she has inherited through their careers. Rugged, intelligent, confident, sophisticated and masculine can be a few examples of the wide range of cultural meanings that celebrities carry. These meanings get transferred to the products through the celebrity endorsement process and finally to the consumers who try to take on those meanings by consuming those products. Success of a celebrity endorsement depends upon the cultural meanings which the celebrity holds and on how well these meanings are transferred to the product through advertisement. (Figure 1)

There are three stages of meaning transfer. In stage one, the celebrities earn cultural meanings through their respective careers, for example, movie performances, sports achievements, social activism. Stage two is the endorsement process in which the cultural meanings which the celebrity holds get transferred to the product he or she is endorsing through advertisements. The cultural meanings inherited by the product then influence



**Figure 1**

attitudes and purchase intentions regarding the product. In stage three, the consumers consume the product in order to take on the meanings the product holds. They try to consume the image associated with celebrities and to accomplish it they consume the products associated with the celebrity (Fowles, 1996). However McCracken (1989) argues that there is no automatic transfer of meaning because just consuming the product is not sufficient to take possession of its meaning. Consumers must claim the meaning and then work with it in order to build and project the cultural meaning they want.

Langmeyer and Walker (1991) conducted an experiment on students and found that when the products were not endorsed by celebrities, they retained only product category images but in celebrity endorsement treatment, they inherited the images of the celebrity endorser. Recently Miller and Allen (2012) investigated the cognitive process underlying meaning transfer. Using evaluative conditioning procedures they found that even beliefs about a well-known brand altered just through mere co-occurrence with a different set of celebrities. They also found that the altered beliefs regarding the brand were now more aligned with existing beliefs about the celebrities who co-occurred with the brand.

**4. Factors Determining the Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsements**

**4.1 Consumer specific factors**

*4.1.2 Demographics:* Khan and Khan (2002) found that female students found celebrities more convincing than male students. Kahle and Homer (1985) found in their

experiment that likable celebrity endorser enhanced recall and recognition ability of female respondents. They also found that under high involvement condition, women recalled more arguments contained in the advertisement when a likable celebrity was used and men recalled more arguments when an unlikable celebrity was used. Atkin and Block (1983), in their study on two sets of audience, found that the younger audience’s evaluation of the celebrity endorsements (in terms of believability, attitudes toward the ad and product, and purchase intentions) were significantly higher than the older audience. Freiden (1984) also found in his experiment that attitudes of younger consumers differed substantially from older consumers. In general, younger consumers rated the advertisements higher than adults.

*4.1.3 Consumer Involvement:* Involvement determines the ability and motivation of consumers to process information (Andrew, Durvasula and Akhter, 1990; Petty et al., 1983). The Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty et al., 1983) states that consumers get persuaded differently under high and low involvement conditions. High level of involvement will motivate the consumers to elaborate more i.e., engage in careful thinking and evaluation of information and arguments in the advertisement. Low elaboration means that the consumer is not sufficiently motivated and therefore he will not engage in active information processing, and will only make inferences on the basis of simple positive and negative cues. Under high Involvement conditions the strength and quality of the persuasive argument (Central route) contained in the ad is what matters more for the consumers (Petty et al.,



1983). Previous studies have shown that consumers become more motivated to elaborate on the content of an advertisement when they are highly involved (Muehling, Laczniak and Andrews, 1993). Studies have shown that “match-up” is processed as a central cue in persuasion (Kirmani and Shiv, 1998; Rice, Kelting and Lutz, 2011). Under low involvement conditions, peripheral cues such as the way the advertisement was made, the music or the imagery, source attractiveness and source credibility become more important in persuading consumers (Petty et al., 1983; Mehta 1994).

**4.1.4 Initial Opinion:** According to cognitive response theory, if the audience has positive initial opinion towards the message, a less credible source will be more persuasive and will positively impact attitudes and behavioural intentions. If they have negative initial opinion, then a high credible source will be more effective in persuading and having positive impact on attitudes and behavioural intentions (Sternthal et al., 1978). This happens because, when the less credible source is used the recipients who are positively predisposed towards the message will feel greater need to insure that their stand is being adequately represented; therefore they will generate more support arguments. When they are negatively predisposed, then a highly credible source will inhibit counter argumentation and stimulate persuasion. Sternthal et al., (1978) manipulated initial opinion (positive and negative), timing of the source and source credibility; their findings supported the cognitive response view of information processing. Another empirical study by Harmon and Coney (1982) reinforced the cognitive response theory.

## 4.2 Celebrity specific factors

**4.2.1 Demographics:** Findings regarding the endorser’s gender are mixed (Erdogan, 1999). Debevec and Kernan (1994) found that attractive female endorsers generated more positive attitudes than attractive male endorsers, across both the genders. In another study, male endorsers produced more purchase intentions for male consumers and female endorsers produced more purchase intentions for female consumers (Caballero, Lumpkin and Madden, 1970). Khan and Khan (2002) found that male students gave higher ratings to male celebrities vis a vis female celebrities in terms of effectiveness. Freiden (1984) found in his study that gender of the endorser did not significantly affect consumer attitudes; however, although not significantly, male endorsers scored better than female endorsers on some variables such as “ad informative”

and “spokesperson knowledgeable”. Based on his findings he suggested using male endorsers in case of doubt.

**4.2.2 Number of Endorsements:** An exclusive celebrity is believed to be more effective for the brand than a celebrity who has been endorsing multiple brands. Mowen and Brown (1981) found that multiple endorsements by a celebrity resulted in less favourable evaluation of the advertisement, the product and low intentions to buy. Also Tripp, Jensen and Carlson (1994) found that multiple endorsements negatively affect the perception about the endorser and attitude towards the advertisement. Rice et al. (2011) studied the interaction between involvement, number of endorsements and congruency (fit) between product and the celebrity. Their study revealed that under low involvement condition, brand attitudes became more negative with increase in the number of endorsements by the celebrity. Under high involvement, brand attitudes depend on the congruency between the brands endorsed and the celebrity. When the brands endorsed were congruent to the celebrity, multiple endorsements produced favourable brand attitude; when the congruence was low, multiple endorsements produced less favourable brand attitude. The reason is that, under high involvement condition, the congruence between celebrity and the brand is processed as persuasive argument (central cue) by the consumers, but in low involvement conditions, peripheral cues (such as, source characteristics, likability of the endorser), not the argument strength, affects brand attitude (Kirmani and Shiv 1998, Kang and Herr 2006).

**Degree of Congruency:** Lee and Thorson (2008) studied the effects of different degrees of congruency (extreme match, moderate mismatch to extreme mismatch) on attitudes and behavioural intentions. Based on schema-congruity framework they suggested a theoretical framework that moderate mismatch between celebrity and product image would produce more favourable responses to the advertisement. Although not statistically significant, moderate mismatch was found to be more effective than extreme match in their study.

## 4.3 Product specific factors

Friedman and Friedman (1979) found that products involving high social or psychological risk are better suited for celebrity endorsers. They also found that expert endorsers are better suited for products having high financial, performance or physical risks. Atkin and Block (1983) also suggested using celebrities for products with

high social and psychological risks. Packard (1957) suggested using celebrities for products that are perceived as status symbols. Floyd (1999) in his Three-Order Hierarchy model suggests using celebrity endorsers when there are minimal differences (low product differentiation) between competing brands. According to this model, when there is high product differentiation in competing brands then the consumer becomes highly involved and tends to focus more on information about the brand to evaluate each alternative. Minimal differences in competing brands leads to low involvement of consumers in the purchase process; they may focus less on information and more on non-message elements such as, the celebrity.

## 5. Qualitative Research

A qualitative research was carried out to study factors identified through literature review. The purpose of the qualitative research was to generate support for the identified factors and also to figure out their relative importance. Another purpose was to access the applicability of these factors in the Indian context. Based on literature review, the following factors relating to the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements were chosen for qualitative research.

Source attributes (Attractiveness, Trustworthiness and Expertise), celebrity exposure, celebrity product match-up, meaning transfer model, product differentiation in the product category and types of risk associated with the product.

### 5.1 Methodology

Ten most successful and eight most unsuccessful celebrity endorsement campaigns were identified in the Indian scenario. The successful campaigns included Amitabh Bachchan for Parker Pen & Cadburys; Sachin for Boost health drink, MRF tyres & Pepsi; SRK for Hyundai Santro; Aamir Khan for Coca Cola; Aishwarya for Nakshatra diamond jewellery; Zakir Hussain for Tajmahal Tea; and Hrithik Roshan for S Kumar's Suiting. The unsuccessful campaigns were Amiatbh for Maruti Suzuki Versa & Nerolac paints; SRK for Lux & Videocon; Sachin for Fiat Palio; Virat Kohli for Fair and Lovely; Harbhajan Singh for Hublot; and Sehwaq for Reliance Mobiles (Abhishek and Sahay, 2013 ; Joshi and Ahluwalia, 2008; Financial Express, 2013).

Nine experts were then chosen to analyse these ad campaigns based on the factors identified through

literature review. The experts separately analysed each campaign. They gave their personal observations about the overall opinion of consumers regarding the identified campaigns. The following steps were taken by the experts for analysing the campaigns.

*Step 1:* For each campaign, the positioning and meanings for which the brand stands for were assessed. Then, the level of product differentiation present in the product category and various risks associated with the brand were assessed.

*Step 2:* Rating of the celebrity endorsers on source factors (attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise) was done for each campaign. For rating, the experts were asked to give a score out of five.

*Step 3:* For each campaign, the type of match-up present was identified and a score out of five was given to the strength of the match-up.

*Step 4:* For each campaign, experts were asked to identify five most prominent meanings associated with the celebrity at the time of the campaign. The meanings were identified using the celebrity meaning scale developed by Choi and Rifon (2007) and source credibility scale by Ohanian (1990), presented in Tables 1 and 2 respectively. By selecting the most recurring or common cultural meanings in the list of each expert, a final list of five cultural meanings for each celebrity was prepared. The experts were then supplied the final set of celebrity meanings for each campaign and they gave a score out of five to the relevance of the celebrity meanings for the brand and the target audience.

*Step 5:* An approximate figure of the number brands each celebrity had endorsed before the concerned campaign was obtained through different sources.

*Step 6:* Finally the mean score for each campaign was calculated (Table 2).

### 5.2 Results and Analysis

Results and analysis are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

*Source Models:* Source models do not seem reliable, as we can see that same celebrities (Amitabh, Sachin and SRK) have delivered both successful and unsuccessful advertisement campaigns (Tables 1 and 2). SRK and Virat are perceived high on attractiveness but they were unsuccessful even for attractiveness related products (Lux, and Fair & Lovely respectively). Despite high on trustworthiness, Amitabh, SRK and Sachin were not

**Table 2: Celebrity Meaning Scale (Choi and Riffon, 2007)**

<b>Genuineness</b>
Socially responsible/Socially Irresponsible
Wise/stupid
Pleasant/unpleasant
Comfortable/uncomfortable
<b>Competence</b>
Strong/weak
Confident/apprehensive
Enthusiastic/not enthusiastic
Determined/undetermined
<b>Excitement</b>
Rugged/Delicate
Excitable/calm
Dominating/submissive
Masculine/feminine
<b>Sociability</b>
Public/private
Bold/shy

successful for other products (Amitabh for Versa, Nerolac; SRK for Lux, Videocon; and Sachin for Palio). 'Expertise' seems more reliable as we can see that except in one case, none of the celebrity endorsers was perceived high on expertise in the unsuccessful endorsements. In the case of successful campaigns perceived expertise was 60% or more in seven cases and more than 70% in three cases.

*Exposure of the celebrity:* Out of eight unsuccessful campaigns, three had highly overexposed celebrity endorsers, while in the case of successful campaigns the exposure was comparatively low. The highest exposure in a case of a successful campaign was eight endorsements by Amitabh. SRK, Sachin and Virat were the most overexposed celebrities in the case of unsuccessful campaigns. These findings support the negative effect of celebrity over exposure.

*Match-up:* Celebrity product match-up appears more reliable as compared to source models in ensuring a successful celebrity endorsement campaign. The strength of match-up in the case of unsuccessful campaigns was considerably low as compared to that of successful campaigns. Nine out of ten successful campaigns had high intensity of match-up. However, in three

unsuccessful cases, the celebrity-product match-up was rated high.

*Meaning transfer:* According to the meaning transfer model, any product can be given almost any cultural meaning through a celebrity endorsement. But it is effective when the meanings that the celebrity brings are relevant for the brand and the target audience. In all successful cases the relevance of celebrity meanings for the brand was highly relevant (more than 60%), while in all unsuccessful cases it was considerably low (60% or less). Relevance of celebrity meanings for the target consumers was also very high in each successful campaign (70% or more). However, it was also high in five unsuccessful campaigns (60% or more). This finding suggests that the relevance of celebrity meanings for the brand is more important.

*Product Differentiation:* According to the three-order hierarchy model, celebrity endorsers are not effective (effective) when there is high (low) product differentiation in the product category.

Our findings support to some extent the three-order hierarchy model as in all the unsuccessful campaigns



Table 3: Successful Endorsements

Advertisement	Category Product Differentiation	Product Category Risk	Positioning of the Brand/ Brand Meaning	Celebrity attractiveness	Celebrity Involvement	Celebrity expertise	Exposure of celebrity	Celebrity product match-up	Strength of Match-up	Celebrity meanings	Relevance of celebrity meaning for the brand	Relevance of the celebrity meaning for the target consumers
Amulsh for Parler Pao	Low	Moderately high social and psychological risk	Many pens for sophisticated people with intelligence	3.6	4.6	3	5	Image based	3.8	classy, elegant, sophisticated, socially responsible, determined	4	4.3
Sachin for Boost	Low	Moderate performance risk and physical risk	No.1 Health drink for the adolescents and youth	3.4	4.8	4.3	3	Expertise based	3.8	determined, confident, pleasant, socially responsible, wise	3.3	4
SRK for Hyundai Santro	High	High performance, financial, physical/social	Complete Family car/ starts for efficiency and advance technology	4.6	4.2	2.5	4	Image based	4.1	pleasant, unbiased, determined/confident, wise	3.8	4.2
Amulsh for eashy	Low	Low physical risk	A trustworthy brand	3.6	4.6	2.9	8	Image based	2.5	classy, elegant, sophisticated, socially responsible, determined	3.4	3.5
Amulsh for Coca Cola	Low	Moderate social psychological and physical risk	A drink for chill, warmth, genuine, fun and joy	4.5	4.4	3.2	2	Image based	4	socially responsible, wise, determined, pleasant, enthusiastic	3.9	4
Sachin for MBP tires	Medium	High performance, financial and physical risk	Durable strong performs, high value for money, Tyres/ Durability, Trust	3.4	4.8	3	4	Image based	3.2	determined, confident, pleasant, socially responsible, wise	3.3	4
Autheraya for Anishahay	Medium	High social psychological and financial risk	Jewellery for sophisticated, wise, stylish and luxury people	4.8	3.8	4.3	7	Attractiveness based	4.8	classy, sexy, feminine, confident, elegant	4.7	4.8
Zakir Hussain for Tajmahal tea	Low	Moderate performance and social risk	Choice of a life, sophisticated and creative people	2.6	3.6	3.1	5	Image based	3.2	pleasant, comfortable, classy, determined, sophisticated	4.1	4
Sachin for Pepsi	Low	Moderate social psychological and physical risk	Choice of generation/ excitement	3.4	4.8	2.8	5	Image based	3.5	determined, confident, pleasant, socially responsible, wise	3.3	4.1
Hussain for Starbuck's	Medium	High social and psychological and performance risk	A choice of life and sophisticated/ Starts for style sophistication, patriotism	4.7	4	3.6	3	Attractiveness based	3.8	sexy, masculine, rugged, confident, strong, pleasant	3.3	3.8

Table 4: Unsuccessful Endorsements

Advertisement	Category Product Differentiation	Product Category Risk	Positioning of the brand/ brand meaning	Celebrity attractiveness	Celebrity trustworthiness	Celebrity expertise	Exposure of the celebrity	Celebrity product match-up	Strength of Match-up	Celebrity meanings	Relevance of celebrity meanings for the brand	Relevance of the celebrity meanings for the target consumers
Amrtaab for Versa	High	High performance, financial, physical, social and psychological risk	Family Car	3.6	4.8	2.3	5	Image based	3.1	classy, elegant, sophisticated, socially responsible, determined	3	3
SAR for Lux	Medium	High socio-psychological and moderate performance risk	Secrets of the Beauty signifies beauty, femininity, confidence	4.6	4.2	1.8	34	Image based	2.5	pleasant, enthusiastic, determined, confident, wise	2.5	2.9
Shreeya for Reliance tobacco	High	High performance, financial and moderate social risk	Brand for the masses! stands for patriotism	2.1	3.8	1.9	5	Image based	2.3	determined, classy, strong, shy, private	2.2	3
Amrtaab for Amrtaab Paros	Medium	High performance, financial and social risk	Premium discretionary points/ stands for credibility fun and joy.	3.6	4.6	2.2	8	Image based	2.6	classy, elegant, sophisticated, socially responsible, determined	2.8	3.1
Kohli for Fair and Lovely	Medium	High social and psychological and moderate performance risk	Best protection for skin! Signifies confidence, ambitions, beauty	4.1	4	2.6	10	attractiveness based	3	confident, dominating, rugged, determined, bold	2.1	2.9
Mehak for Hublot	Medium	High social, psychological and moderate performance risk	Brand for elite! Signifies creativity and technology	2.2	2.9	1.9	5	Image based	1.8	enthusiastic, rugged, dominating, confident, bold	1.5	1.6
Sachin for Malls	High	High performance, financial, physical, social and psychological risk	Car for smart people! Signifies smartness and style	3.4	4.8	3.1	8	Image based	3.2	determined, confident, pleasant, socially responsible, wise	3	3.3
SAR for Vishvaso	High	High performance, physical and financial risk	India's best in class! Home appliances! Signify technology and patriotism	4.6	4.2	2.4	39	Image based	2.8	pleasant, enthusiastic, determined, confident, wise	3	3.8

product differentiation was either high or medium, while six successful campaigns had low product differentiation. However, among successful campaigns, one had high (SRK for Santro) and three had medium product differentiation. But in all these four cases (successful cases with high product differentiation) the strength of match-up, and the relevance of celebrity meanings for the brand and the target audience, were also high.

*Risk associated with the products:* According to some studies, celebrity endorsers are not suited for products involving high performance, financial and physical risks; rather, they are suitable for products involving high social and psychological risks. Again we find partial support for these studies as we see that in five unsuccessful cases, the products had high performance, physical and financial risk. Further, moderate amount of performance risk was present in the remaining three unsuccessful cases. Further, among the successful campaigns, three cases had high and three had moderate social and psychological risks. But here also, in two successful cases (SRK for Santro and Sachin for MRF) where the products had high performance, financial and physical risks, the intensity of match-up, and the relevance of celebrity meanings for the brand and the target audience, scored high.

## 6. Discussion

At the very outset, it should be noted that in the case of all unsuccessful campaigns, each brand was well established and successful, but it was unable to benefit from the particular celebrity endorsement.

Based on our study, we can say that the source factors alone are not sufficient in ensuring celebrity endorsement effectiveness. According to source models, any celebrity will deliver as long as he/she is perceived high on source attributes. But we see that the same celebrities have delivered both successful and unsuccessful campaigns. Attractive and trustworthy celebrities were not always successful (SRK, Virat and Amitabh). Further, two cases (SRK for LUX and Virat for Fair and Lovely) also contradict the idea that attractive celebrities are more suited for attractiveness related products. Though the 'perceived expertise' attribute of the celebrity seems a bit more reliable than the other two, yet we can see an unsuccessful case, Sachin for Palio (3.1), where the perceived expertise was high. These observations raise serious doubts on the ability of source factors in ensuring endorsement effectiveness. Match-up hypothesis offers a better way to ensure effectiveness of celebrity

endorsements. We can see that the match-up scores of successful campaigns were considerably higher than the unsuccessful campaigns. But here also, we find four cases where the results contradict the theory. They are the three unsuccessful cases with high match-up score (Sachin for Palio 3.2, Amitabh for Versa 3.1 and Virat for Fair and Lovely 3) and one highly successful campaign with very low match-up score (Amitabh for Cadburys 2.5). A question now arises that whether adhering to match-up is always fruitful.

The success of Cadburys campaign can be explained through the meaning transfer model. Initially Cadburys was positioning itself as a brand that is must at times of celebration, happiness and fun with the tag line "Asli Swad Zindagi Ka". But after the 'worm controversy' it wanted to reposition itself as a trustworthy brand. Amitabh is one of the most trustworthy and well respected celebrities in the country. His image may not be congruent to the brand but his cultural meanings were the need of the hour for Cadburys. Therefore, through the advertising campaign, Cadburys very intelligently acquired the cultural meanings of Amitabh (i.e., trustworthy, socially reliable and determined). The ad campaign also showed the new Cadburys with a quality seal. This campaign now stands as one of the most successful celebrity endorsements in the country.

Virat's endorsement of 'Fair and Lovely' is another example that supports meaning transfer. Here the product is attractiveness-related and the celebrity scored high on both attractiveness (4.1) and attractiveness based match-up (3), but still the campaign was not successful. The reason can be the irrelevance of the Virat's cultural meanings for the brand (score 2.1). A fairness cream for men requires a celebrity with highly prominent meanings of pleasant, elegant, attractive, classy, confident and wise. Virat is perceived attractive, but still his cultural meanings are not perfect for 'Fair and lovely', they are more suitable for ADIDAS, a sports apparel brand he is currently endorsing.

It is clear from the Table that all the successful campaigns scored relatively high on relevance of the celebrity meanings for both the brand and the target consumers. However, three unsuccessful campaigns scored 60% in terms of the relevance of celebrity meanings for the brand, and five unsuccessful campaigns scored more than 60% on the relevance of celebrity meanings for the target consumers. But in all these cases, the products had

high performance, financial and physical risks categorised by high product differentiation, and these product specific factors, as we know, moderate the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements.

Lets us now discuss the role of 'product differentiation in the category' and the 'risk associated with the products' in relation to these campaigns. All the eight cases of unsuccessful campaigns support the three-order hierarchy model as in all these cases, the product differentiation was either high or medium (high in four cases and medium in four cases). Conversely, four cases of successful campaigns contradict the three-order hierarchy model as one of them had high product differentiation (SRK for Santro) and three had medium product differentiation. But high score on 'match-up' and 'the relevance of the celebrity meanings' could have made these four campaigns successful. We know that when there are large numbers of perceived differences among the competing brands (Floyd, 1999), the consumers become highly involved and focus more on product specific factors rather than the celebrity, but we also know that according to ELM, the strength of the persuasive argument (central route) is more important when the consumers are highly involved. Further, studies have shown that 'match-up' is processed as a central route and it strengthens the persuasive argument. It explains why SRK was successful for Santro and not for Videocon when both these brands had high product differentiation. At the time of the launch of Santro, SRK with his family boy image had become a household name in India; Hyundai which wanted to position Santro as a 'complete family car' tried to match the 'family boy image' of SRK with the car. The target consumers (middle income families) immediately identified the similarity between SRK and Santro. Further, the cultural meanings of SRK were also very relevant for the brand and were highly desired by Indian middle income families. In our study this campaign scored extremely high on 'match-up' and relevance of cultural meanings for the brand and target consumers (4.1, 3.8 and 4.2 respectively). In the case of Videocon, SRK was neither a good match (2.8) nor were his cultural meanings very relevant for the brand (3). These findings suggest that celebrity meanings may also serve as a central route in persuasion. It should be noted that by this time SRK had become extremely overexposed. As the exposure of a celebrity increases, his image and cultural meanings also become diluted and vague. The celebrity also inherits the meanings of the brands he had

been endorsing (McCracken, 1989). Therefore, in a case of overexposed celebrity, it becomes difficult for both the consumers and the advertisers to identify prominent meanings for which the celebrity stands. Dilution in SRK's once held family boy image and his cultural meanings due to overexposure might have also contributed to the non-performance of the Videocon campaign.

Similarly, in the cases of Amitabh for Versa and Sachin for Palio (where there was high product differentiation), the match-up scores were good (3.1 and 3.2 respectively) but not up to the mark to serve as a central cue in persuasion. Further, the relevance of celebrity meanings for the brand was also not very high in both these cases. It again suggests that the relevance of celebrity meanings may strengthen persuasive argument. In the case of Versa, Amitabh was not a perfect match; he is a larger than life personality. Consumers expect a larger than life brand for him and not an ordinary 'family car'. Also, keeping in mind his cultural meanings of classy, elegant, sophisticated, socially responsible, determined, Amitabh is more suitable for luxury, elite and classy products (for example, luxury pens). One may argue that Amitabh has been successful for non luxury products, such as Navaratan Oil, but in this case the product differentiation is low and it is not a typical high involvement product. In case of low involvement, peripheral route of persuasion becomes more important; therefore just the presence of a celebrity will be sufficient, but in case of a high involvement product, Amitabh should serve as a perfect match in order to deliver an effective endorsement. Later, with repositioning and cost reduction, Versa was able to achieve some sales. Fiat Palio was also a moderately successful product in other countries. The car was a powerful hatch back with low fuel efficiency at the time when mileage was extremely important for Indian consumers. Therefore, Fiat decided to position Palio as a powerful, smart and stylish car. Unfortunately, Sachin was neither a perfect match for the car nor was he the best choice of delivering the desired meanings of style and smartness, and power to the brand. The Reliance Mobile campaign (another case of high product differentiation) also suffered due the low celebrity-product 'match-up' and low relevance of the celebrity meanings for the brand. Based on these examples we can say that in case of high differentiation and high consumer involvement, match-up and the relevance of celebrity meanings become extremely important.

Similarly, the findings suggest that when the product has high performance, financial and physical risks, the match-up and relevance of celebrity meanings become extremely important as we can see in the case of two successful campaigns (SRK for Santro and Sachin for MRF Tyres). In both these campaigns, the product had high performance, physical and financial risks, but the scores of match-up and relevance of celebrity meanings were also very high. However, in the case of five unsuccessful campaigns (where the products had high performance, financial and physical risks) the scores of match-up and meaning relevance were not up to the mark.

### 7. Findings and Conclusion

Based on the review of past literature and the qualitative research undertaken, main findings of the study are as follows. One, meaning transfer model offers more comprehensive explanation for the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements. Two, the cultural meanings of the celebrity, celebrity product match-up, celebrity expertise, celebrity exposure, consumer involvement, product differentiation in the product category and the type of risks associated with the product are important factors that determine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements. Three, the relevance of celebrity meanings for the brand is as important, if not more, as the celebrity product match-up. Four, source expertise is more reliable than the other two source model factors i.e., trustworthiness and attractiveness. Five, among the consumer specific factors, consumer involvement is an important moderator of celebrity endorsement's effectiveness. Six, the degree of product differentiation and the type of risks associated with the product also moderate the effect of celebrity endorser. Seven, match-up and relevance of celebrity meanings become extremely important in case of high consumer involvement, high differentiation in the product category and products having high performance, physical and financial risks. Last, the factors identified in past research seem important and applicable in the Indian scenario as well.

Meaning transfer model appropriately explains the rationale behind the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers. Consumers try to acquire the cultural meanings held by the celebrities they like, by imitating them and consuming the brands which symbolize those celebrities. It also overcomes the inabilities of other models (Match-up Hypothesis and Source Models) to explain certain aspects of celebrity endorsement effectiveness. However, we

cannot ignore the importance of source models and match-up hypothesis as previous studies have confirmed their benefits. Consumer involvement is another important moderator of celebrity endorser effectiveness. Celebrity endorsers are effective in low involvement conditions because they provide peripheral cues, but in high involvement conditions, they have significant impact only when they provide strength to the persuasive argument contained in the advertisement. For this purpose, match-up is very important as studies have shown that match-up, be it attractiveness based, expertise based or image based, serves as the central cue in advertisement (Homer and Kahle, 1990; Rice et al., 2011; Kirmani and Shiv, 1998; Lee and Thorson, 2008). The study also found that the relevance of celebrity meanings for the brand may serve as a central route in persuasion.

This paper has reviewed the theories and factors that can help both academicians and practitioners in understanding the dynamics of celebrity endorsement effectiveness. One cannot ignore the power of celebrities in breaking through the cluttered media environment and drawing attention towards the advertisement. They increase awareness and recall of the product and the advertisement. They also give symbolic meanings to the product through the meaning transfer process. However, the effectiveness of celebrities in improving the attitude towards the advertisement and the brand and generating purchase intentions is moderated by factors identified in the paper, especially by the cultural meanings of the celebrity, the celebrity-product congruency, type of risks associated with the product, level of product differentiation and consumer involvement.

### 8. Managerial Implications

The main objective of advertising is to convey information to the target audience and to build positive attitudes and purchase intentions about the product/service being offered. The celebrity endorser plays a very important role in selectively addressing the target audience. If the celebrity is relevant to and popular among the target audience, then it will help in breaking through the clutter and also in enhancing the recall of the advertisement. But enhanced recall and attention towards the advertisement does not always lead to positive attitudes and purchase intentions. Further, the fee of endorsement, especially in the case of a popular celebrity, is very high. Therefore celebrity endorsement should also justify the cost incurred by generating positive attitudes and purchase intentions.



Here are some important points that advertisers should keep in mind in order to make celebrity endorsements more effective. One, the popularity of the celebrity alone is not sufficient to induce positive attitudes and purchase intentions; celebrity meanings should also be relevant and suitable for the brand. For example, SRK is extremely popular among youth and his cultural meanings are also relevant for them. But his meanings are not perfect for a sports motorcycle or a brand of sport shoes that advertisers are trying to sell to the youth. Second, the advertisers should not always go for the most popular celebrity as a popular celebrity often endorses many brands and because of this, the cultural meanings associated with him might get diluted and vague. Advertisers should select a celebrity who very prominently has the desired cultural meanings. Third, although we have said that celebrity meanings are more important, still we cannot undermine the importance of match-up because past researches have shown that it is processed as a persuasive argument. Thus, the advertisers should ensure both high celebrity product match-up and relevance of celebrity meanings for the brand, especially for products like automobiles, consumer electronics and services.

### 9. Limitation and Direction for Future Research

The study was primarily based on literature review and qualitative research, both of which come with limitations. Several consumer and advertisement specific factors which may act as moderators were left out in the study. The timing of the source and repetition also have an impact on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements. There is also dearth of research regarding the types of portrayal of the celebrity in an advertisement. Should the celebrity be used as an actor, endorser, spokesperson or testimonial (Erdogan, 1999)? Should they be used explicitly, implicitly, imperatively or co-presently (McCracken, 1989)? Whether these ways of portraying celebrities serve as a central cue or peripheral cue in persuasion? Initial opinion and demographics of the consumer are also some important determinants which were not included in the qualitative research. Subjective and objective knowledge of consumers can minimize the impact of an endorsement; therefore, the moderating effect of consumer expertise on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement can also be inquired through future research (Rice et al., 2011). Further, an empirical work is required to conform that the match-up and relevance of celebrity meanings for the brand become more important

in case of products having high financial, performance and physical risks.

Although this study found that the relevance of celebrity meanings for the brand might serve as a central cue in persuasion, quantitative empirical support is still required. There is also a possibility that various source attributes and match-up facilitate the process of meaning transfer (Miller and Allen, 2012). This is also a potential area where future research is required.

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