Influence of Celebrity Worship Motives on Perceived Brand Evaluation of Endorsed-Brand

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Abstract: The concept of Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement has been explained in different models and theories as a notion related to the characteristics of the celebrity and the management – related perspectives of its use. The impact generated through the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on endorsed brand is referred as brand evaluation. In addition, Absorption–Addiction Model (McCutcheon, Lynn, Lange, & Houran, 2002) explains how psychological bond between respondents and the respective celebrity is determined via “Celebrity Worship Motives” influences brand evaluation. Accordingly, this paper reviews how celebrity worship motives operate as a mechanism to moderate the relationship between perceived effectiveness of celebrity endorsement and perceived brand evaluation contexts. An extended literature review was followed as the main research instrument by highlighting empirical research gaps postulated by recently held studies. Accordingly, this study aims to propose research propositions to services sector brands in line with the empirical research gaps postulated by recently held studies. Finally, researchers suggest research hypotheses based on the literature reviews and discussions connected to the notion of celebrity worship motives. Paper concluded claiming empirical gaps found in services sector to examine how celebrity worship motives moderates the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluation.

Keywords: Absorption–Addiction Model, Celebrity Worship Motives, Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement, Perceived Brand Evaluation, Services Sector

Introduction

Background of the Study: Notion of Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity endorsement has been reported as a significant commercial practice across the world depending on its commercial impact in terms of practice intensity, cost and the strategic effect made on endorsed brands (Ding, Molchanov & Stork, 2010; Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015; Elberse & Verleun, 2012; Hung, 2014; Shimp, 2003; Tzoumaka, Tsiontou, & Siomkos, 2014). The economic impact of celebrity endorsement practices has been justified with media branding contexts (Elberse & Verleun, 2012) whilst the nature of celebrity endorsement has been claimed as a fastest growing advertising method as a popular branding strategy across different markets, including China (Hung, Tse & Cheng, 2011). Meanwhile, India is noted an economy that practices wider range of celebrity endorsement strategies for branding (Suprijo & Kumar, 2012), and USA is also a significant context in this regard (Plank, 2012). Sri Lanka is claimed a significant context of using celebrities to endorse services brands (Dissanayake, 2015; Sri Lanka Celebrity Index Report, 2015) whilst Japan has been noted as an intensive case of using celebrities in marketing promotions (Temperley & Tangen, 2006). Further, the impact of celebrity endorsement practices on branding has been claimed as wider impacts in the managerial practices as a popular branding tool connected with media strategy, community and promotional methods (Alsmadi 2006; Belch & Belch, 2011; Choi & Berger, 2010). Meanwhile, the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement practices in different industries and product contexts had been examined to build empirical argument on brand-related behaviors and brand evaluation contexts (Okorie, 2010; Okorie & Aderogba, 2011; Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015, Hung, 2014).
Moreover, the impact made by celebrity endorsement has been postulated as the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement which leads to endorsed brand evaluation and brand-related behaviors (Amos, Holmes & Strutton, 2008; Seno & Lukas, 2007; Tzoumaka, et.al.2014). This notion is further verified by the recently held empirical studies found in the scope of celebrity endorsement referring source-based and management-based factors as the content of effectiveness of celebrity endorsements (Ambroise, Sohier, Florence & Albert ,2014; Fleck, Korchia & Roy,2012; Ibok & Ibok,2013; Okyere & Asamoah 2015; Rachita, Nirmal & Priya,2013;Spry, Pappu & Cornwell,2011 & Tzoumaka,et.al. 2014). Meanwhile, Shimp (2003; 2008; 2010) mentioned TEARS model as the determinants of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement that influence to evaluate the endorsed brand. TEARS model refers Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness, Respect and Similarity as the variables that collectively determine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement (Shimp, 2003, 2010). However, it finds less empirical studies carried out measuring the holistic impact of TEARS variables to determine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement.

The notion of effectiveness of celebrity endorsement has been extendedly referred in the empirical studies. The impact generated through the source-based factors which are connected to the celebrity character, and management–based factors which are related to the implementation perspectives of celebrity endorsement, has been referred as the overall determinants of effectiveness of celebrity endorsement (Seno & Lukas, 2007). This argument has been further verified in the empirical studies claiming the impact generated by source-based and management-based as perceived effectiveness of celebrity endorsement (Amos, et.al., 2008; Atkin & Block, 1983; Dissanayake, 2015; Tzoumaka,et.al. 2014).

Empirical Review on the Relationship between Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement and Perceived Brand Evaluation

The effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in evaluating endorsed brand has been examined by empirical studies with reference to different products and market contexts. The overall impact of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement towards the endorsed-brands has been explained as a mode of meaning transferring mechanism that results respondents to evaluate the endorsed brand, said as brand evaluation (Elina & Leila, 2010; Miller & Allen, 2012). Adding to the same argument, it has claimed that source-based factors related to effectiveness of celebrity endorsement influence brand evaluation (Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015, Kahandawaarachchi, Dissanayake & Maitra, 2016; Spry, Pappu & Cornwell, 2011; Thusyanthy & Tharanikaran, 2015). Further, Keller (2013) built an argument on how celebrity endorsement influences consumers to evaluate brands leaving a wider scope to examine the different contexts of brand evaluations. The argument made by Keller (2013) was associated with the theory called “Associative-Network-Memory-Theory-ANMT” (Anderson, 1983) providing a rationalized mechanism claiming how celebrity endorsement directly affects consumers to evaluate the respective endorsed-brand. The proposition explained in ANMT leaves a mechanism to identify how cognitive psychological process responses to information connected to various nodes, for instance, celebrity endorsement as an informational push that results evaluating endorsed-brand (Anderson, 1983; Janiszewski & Van Osselaer, 2000; Roedder-John, et.al., 2006). Thus, it could postulate that celebrity endorsement as an informational node used in brand building strategies that results consumers to evaluate the endorsed-brand via an associated-network memory. Accordingly, the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement which is determined by source-based and management-based factors (Seno & Lukas, 2007) could be considered as a connected informational node that influences consumers to evaluate the respective brand stimulated with a networked memory. This claim is in par with the argument referred as how particular cognitive sphere sets as a network of associated subjects that subsequently organizes the memory as a networked-model towards the particular subject being evaluated (Anderson, 1983). Therefore, it could postulate that the source-based and management-based factors related to celebrity endorsement as a network of information whilst the endorsed-brand is said to be the subject being evaluated via the respective networked memory. In brief, the influence made by the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on endorsed brand could be claimed as brand evaluation.
(Keller, 2013; Roedder-John, et.al. 2006; Spry, et.al. 2011). This argument is further supported by the empirical insights refereed as consumers usually tend to respond to external nodes resulting brand-related associated memory (Keller, 1993, 2013). This is in line with the finding of Till & Shimp (1998) that claimed celebrities could stimulate informational nodes towards the memory of consumers as associative links of nodes connected to the endorsed-brand. As it refers in the “Associative-Network-Memory-Theory” (Anderson, 1983; as cited by Keller, 2013), this paper also postulates that consumers tend to evaluate the endorsed-brand via a set-network memory which is generated through the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. Thus, source-based and management-based factors related to effectiveness of celebrity endorsements (Seno & Lukas, 2007) operate as a set of factors that determine the associated network memory within the respondents who expose to endorsed message resulting evaluate endorsed-brands. The TEARS model proposed by Shimp (2003;2008;2010) is an extended explanation to source-based factors whilst multiplicity (Hsu & McDonald, 2002) is found as one of the intensively claimed variables to be examined within management-based context (Hung, et.al., 2011; Oyeniyi, 2014; Seno & Lukas, 2007). Accordingly, the collective impact of source-based and management-based factors, particularly multiplicity (Hsu & McDonald, 2002) has been emphasized as the overall effectiveness of celebrity endorsement (Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015, Zahaf & Anderson, 2008). Thus, we postulate the importance of measuring multiplicity (Hsu & McDonald, 2002) or over endorsement (Hung, et.al. 2011) as a component to determine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement.

Moreover, the context of brand evaluation has been emphasized with different faces of cognitive assessments towards the respective subject. The empirical insights related to effectiveness of celebrity endorsement refer that brand attitude as one of the contexts of brand evaluation (Folse, Burton & Netemeyer, 2013; Hung, et.al. 2011; Koernig & Boyd, 2009; Till, Stanley, & Priluck, 2008). Accordingly, brand evaluation is referred as a context of how consumers tend to judge a brand based on the informational clues and stimulations received. The notion of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement has been examined with different brand evaluation contexts, for instance with brand attitude (Bandura, 2001; Guse, et.al. 2011; Hung, 2014; Guse & Nabi, 2010). Adding to the said, Hung (2014) mentioned that playful and aspirational motives operate as observational stimulation to consumers evaluating the brand attitude. Meanwhile, some studies have framed their studies claiming brand trust as a context of brand evaluation (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1995; Folse, et.al. 2013; Zipporah & Mberia, 2014). In addition to the said, empirical studies refer the contexts of cognitive assessment for a brand or any related subject as brand evaluation. For instance, brand love has been stated as one of the contexts of brand evaluation in recently held empirical studies (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015; Joshi & Ahluwalia, 2008). Accordingly, it could suggest brand love, brand trust and brand attitude as some of the mainly referred contexts of brand evaluation found within the scope of brand-related studies. Meanwhile, investigating how those variables behave with different product contexts and consumer contexts has been claimed as empirical gaps to be addressed (Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015; Dwivedi, McDonald & Johnson, 2014; Spry et.al. 2011). Accordingly, this paper focuses to derive the future research propositions in line with foresaid review and empirical research gaps proposed within.

**Role of Celebrity Worship Motives as an Influential Mechanism on Brand Evaluation: Postulating an Empirical Argument**

Effectiveness of Celebrity endorsement has been examined with brand-related behaviors and brand evaluation contexts in recently held studies. However, the psychological bond between the celebrity and consumer plays a critical role in determining the impact of the endorsed message in evaluating respective brand (Dissanayake, 2015; Hung, 2014; Hung et.al. 2011). The mechanism how celebrity and consumer connect as a socio-psychological content has been explained in Absorption-Addiction Model (McCutcheon, et. al. 2002). According to the said model, consumers tend to have a bonded bridge with the celebrity depending on what extend consumers holistically connect with the endorser. This connection is referred as worship motives which includes entertainment-based motivation, intense attachment, and pathological commitment as the main determinants of it (McCutcheon, et. al. 2002). Accordingly, entertainment – based motives are found as how
celebrities generate pleasure experience to respondents when they are being exposed to the respective endorsements. Moreover, McCutcheon, et.al. (2002) explains the manner of how consumers relate to the celebrity through entertainment-based motives like learning about the celebrity, discussing about the celebrity character with different people, and finding a satisfaction by knowing the life-related stories of the respective celebrity character. Meanwhile, Hung (2014) classified entertainment motives under two components namely playful motives and aspirational motives rationalized through Dual Entertainment Path Model. It has discussed how entertainment motives enhance the positive brand endorsement effect in evaluating the respective endorsed-brands. Moreover, playful motives related to celebrity endorsement are found as much connected to both fans and non-fans categories whilst aspirational motives are specially connected with the fans who do have extended psychological follow-up motive with the endorser (Hung, 2014). Further, McCutcheon, Lynn, Ashe, Houran & Malby, (2003) justified that cognitive deficits lead to establish individual’s susceptibility to engage with celebrity worship contents. Meanwhile, empirical evidences prove that consumers shape the behavioral responses in line with how they generate para-social bond created via worship-motives with the respective celebrity character (McCutcheon, et. al. 2002). Thus, it could argue that the mechanism of celebrity worship motives operates as a notion that shapes how consumers tend to respond for the endorsed-brands. In addition to the said, Voderer, Klimmt & Ritterfeld (2004) also referred how entertainment motive operates with playful and aspiration contents in celebrity endorsement practices. Thus, brand building strategies crafted with celebrity endorsement could template the message with both playful and aspirational content to get the holistic attention in evaluating endorsed-brands. The notion of intense attachment is referring to the scenario of how consumers connect to the celebrity character via imaginations. According to the core of intense attachment, consumers tend to be like him/her in sharing all positive and negative matters faced by the particular celebrity, which is mentioned as “para-social” context (McCutcheon et.al. 2002). However, pathological motive is not referred as widely a viable content in worship motives as it indicates such extreme bond with the celebrity. Thus, usually entrainment and intense motives are noticed as variables that determine consumer behavioral response for the endorsed brands (Hung, et.al.2011). Additionally, Houran, et.al. (2005) emphasizes that consumers develop imaginative para-social bond with celebrities that would lead shaping their brand-related responses. Moreover, it has referred that consumers need substantial connectivity and engagement with the celebrity in terms of time, energy and even physical and emotional investment to develop para-social links with the celebrity to respond for the endorsed message (Holt & Thompson, 2004). Thus, it indicates that worship motives as serious influencers which modify or shape the way how consumers respond to endorsed message in evaluating brands. Moreover, the mechanism of patterning consumer behavior through celebrity worship has been explained as reference group effect. It says reference groups could shape the way how consumers tend to respond for the messages received from celebrities in advertising (Thomson, 2006). This explanation was supported by Choi & Rifon (2012) saying reference group is attributed by significant ability to influence individual’s evaluation, behaviors and aspirations. As celebrities being aspirational groups, we argue celebrity worship motives has the power to pattern the way how consumers evaluate endorsed brand.

Meanwhile, Green, Brock & Kaufman (2004) also figured out that para-social bond could minimize the psychological limitation exists between celebrity and consumers that eventually facilitates to shape the fans’ responses towards the endorsed-message. Therefore, it is clear to argue that the influence of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement which is derived through source-based and management-based factors (Seno & Lukas, 2007), could be shaped by “Celebrity-Consumer Bond” which is generated through worship motives. Accordingly, consumers tend to involve in evaluating or responding to the endorsed-brand. Therefore, an argument could be developed referring celebrity worship motives as a mechanism that influences consumers’ normal process of responding to the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in evaluating endorsed brand. Meanwhile, the responses to endorsed-brands had been recognized as brand evaluation contexts as it denotes in the recently held studies (Dissanayake & Ismail 2015, Kahandawaarachchi, et.al.2016, Keller, 2013; Spry, et.al. 2011; Thusyanth & Tharanikaran, 2015). Moreover, Silvera & Austad (2004) mentioned that consumer-celebrity relationship as a notion of value-transfer and endorser-effect perspectives. Accordingly, worship
motives could be justified as the hub of bridging consumers into celebrity character that finally shapes the way how endorsed- message influences consumers to evaluate respective brand. Thus, celebrity worship motives could be postulated as an intermediary mechanism depending on its role of influencing consumers to evaluate the brand endorsed by celebrities. This argument is based on the foresaid review, particularly the process noted in the Absorption-Addiction Model (McCutcheon, et. al. 2002; McCutcheon, et.al. 2003), Dual Entertainment Path-Model (Hung, 2014) and the hypotheses built on value transferring mechanism (Hung, et.al.2011). Accordingly, the mechanism of celebrity worship motives is suggested to examine as a moderating mechanism that shapes the influence of effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in evaluating endorsed-brand.

**Conclusion: Propositions for the Future Studies**

This paper review the empirical evidences and theoretical contributions to postulate how celebrity worship motives operate as a moderating mechanism to shape the influence of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in evaluating endorsed-brand. Entertainment motives and intense attachment motives found in celebrity worship motives are suggested to be examined with deferent contexts of brand evaluation (Dissanayake, 2015; Hung et.al.20111, Hung, 2014, Kahadawarachchi, et.al.2016). The cognitive mechanism of celebrity worship motives has been examined by empirical studies to investigate its influence on endorsed brand evaluation whilst extending more explanations (Green, Brock & Kaufman, 2004; Holt & Thompson, 2004; Houran, Navik & Zerrusen, 2005; Hung, 2014; Keller, 2013). This paper reviews that brand trust, brand love and brand attitude as different contexts to be examined in the purview of perceived brand evaluation influenced by effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. Meanwhile, the notion of brand evaluation contexts is highlighted as empirical research gaps found in relation to different product contexts other than the physical goods including services (Carroll & Ahuvia 2006;Folse,et.al.,2013 Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015;; Hung, et.al. 2011; Kahandawaarachchi, et.al.2016;Karasiewicz & Kowalczyk 2014; Koernig & Boyd 2009 ;Till,Stanley & Priluck, 2008 & Thusyanthy & Tharanikaran,2015). According to the foresaid review, the scope of services is extendedly emphasized to be examined with the concept of effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. The intensive industry practices on celebrity endorsement and the lack of post evaluation on brand-related responses were specifically highlighted to claim the empirical gaps in service sector. Alongside, services namely telecommunication, insurance and financial sectors have been noted in the recent studies claiming empirical investigations to examine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluations leading to brand-related behaviors (Dissanayake & Ismail,2015;Hung,et.al.,2011;Ibok & Ibok ,2013; Karasiewicz & Kowalczyk, 2014;Spry,et.al.,2011).

Having said, this paper reviews the notion of celebrity worship motives as a mechanism connected to the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement and perceived brand evaluation. We postulate the moderating mechanism of celebrity worship motives as the main argument to be addressed in the future studies. Alongside, this study postulates following research hypotheses to be examined with different product contexts including services as mentioned in the review (Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015; Ibok & Ibok, 2013; Karasiewicz & Kowalczyk, 2014;Spry, et.al. 2011).

**Entertainment Motives found within celebrity worship motives moderate the influence of effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluation.**

This proposition could be further extended into playful motives and aspirational motives as it collectively explains the entertainment motives in building hypotheses (Dissanayake, 2015; Hung et.al. 2011; Hung, 2014; McCutcheon et. al., 2002; Vorderer,et.al.,2004; Yeung & Mcinerney, 2005). Thus, future research may follow the undermentioned hypotheses on playful motives and aspirational motives as moderators that shape the influence of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluation.
P1 (a) Aspirational motives moderate the influence of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluation.

P1 (b) Playful motives moderate the influence of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluation.

We suggest to hypothesize the following proposition to determine how intense attachment moderates the influence of effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluation. This proposition is supported by the empirical studies that confirmed influence of celebrity worship motives on brand evaluation, and the studies claim extended studies to validate with different product forms and markets (Dissanayake, 2015; Hung, 2014, Hung. et.al.2011; Karasiewicz & Kowalczuk, 2014).

P2: Intense attachment motives found within celebrity worship motives moderate the influence of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluation.

Additionally, it is suggested to consider the brand trust, brand love and brand attitude as the contexts of brand evaluation to examine with the foresaid research propositions in the future studies. Those contexts were empirically justified in the above mentioned review as areas to be further examined with reference to different product scopes and different market contexts. This paper highlights the context of services as an extended focus for the future researches. For instance, Sri Lanka is referred as such market context to be examined with celebrity endorsement and brand evaluation leading to brand-related behaviors. It has referred telecommunication, insurance and financial service as leading services sectors demand extended empirical studies to evaluate the influence of celebrity endorsement related stimulus on brand related responses and behaviors. (Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015, Kambahawaarachchi, et.al.2016; Sri Lanka Celebrity Index Report, 2015). Likewise, this paper presents the empirical argument to rationalize the future research directions on celebrity worship motives in relation to the concepts of perceived effectiveness of celebrity endorsement and perceived brand evaluation.

References


