



Journal Homepage: -www.journalijar.com
**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
 ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)**

Article DOI:10.21474/IJAR01/6426
 DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/6426>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT AND ITS EFFECT: ARABIC WORLD PERSPECTIVES.

Chokri Kooli, Ahmed Al Habsi and Riad Abadli.

Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 03 December 2017
 Final Accepted: 05 January 2018
 Published: February 2018

Key words:-

Celebrity endorsement; perception;
 customer buying behaviour; Arab
 Countries.

Abstract

This research focuses on the celebrity endorsement and its impact on the customer's buying behaviour and the celebrities' perception in the Arab countries. To investigate the impact of celebrity endorsement on buying behaviour; 32 interviews with some celebrities of The Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates had been conducted. The respondents has been taken to know their perception regarding the celebrity endorsement and its attributes and the impact on customer buying behaviour and effect on sales. The research concluded with a clear identification of the level of knowledge of celebrities in Arab countries regarding celebrity endorsement. The level was low, but the important thing is that there is and needs to be updated and upgraded. But when upgraded, celebrities still believe that normal advertising is more effective than celebrity endorsement. Which again shows a risk in implementing celebrity endorsement in Arab countries?

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Introduction:-

The importance of efficient and viable communication can't be underestimated in a world full of competition. It is with incredible significance to have the capacity to catch the consideration and attention of existing or potential customers to have the capacity to succeed in a business sector. AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire and Action) mirrors this hypothesis by illustrating the significance of getting the consideration of the objective business sector, producing an enthusiasm of the item promoted, establishes desire for the item finally builds up a point to which action is taken place to buy the item. Moreover, the 4 P's of marketing also illustrates the significance of promotion. As clarified, items can easily be duplicated or imitated, price can be adjusted by all competitors, and place (or distribution channel) can be set up by all. With regards to promotion, money related planning could be coordinated, yet the eye-catching campaigns can't be coordinated. Celebrities' endorsement is a mean of communication in advertising and plays a huge role in the field of promotion. In the present research, we explore the idea that Celebrities endorsement enhance a firm's association with the customers and their behaviours in the Arab worlds. Also, we will check if, Celebrities endorsement became a common marketing strategy in today's vast and expanding business world among some of the GCC countries.

A Celebrity endorser was defined by Friedman and Friedman (1979) as, "an individual who is known to the public for his or her achievement in areas other than that of the product class endorsed." Briefly stating, Celebrities endorsement is a utilization of an activity implemented by a Celebrity to endorse a product, in a simpler phrase, Celebrities endorsement is an advertising strategy. The roots of this strategy come from the psychology field. It is understood that Celebrities endorsement standouts amongst the most well-known promoting techniques these days. The person who pays to use or consume products and services is the client, we people place ourselves into this class and as indicated by our needs, purchasing force and preferences we consume these goods and services. Now a day,

numerous organizations are signing contracts with celebrities in the desire that by utilizing celebrities they can accomplish a unique position in the minds of the clients (Arora and Sahu, 2014). Celebrities are the personalities that are seen straightforwardly either in light of the way that of their acceptability or of their charm or as a combination of both. To impact this, marketing specialists use acclaimed individuals in their advertisements to fabricate the sufficiency and lift the credibility of ads (Ahmed et al. 2012). Today, Celebrities support is being seen as more central part in a fused promoting correspondence express, every sponsor needs to use it. Besides, there is furthermore an amazing risk behind the use of the Celebrities. The Celebrities should be coordinated with the character of the things, personality of target business segment and with the general public. Today, the perspective, taste, purchasing example of buyers are changing rapidly and purchasers are ending up being more instructed and aware of the products that they use to fulfil their requirements and needs.

1. The utility of celebrity endorsement

According to Solomon (2012), reference gathering is the one whose states of mind or values are utilized by a person as the premise for conduct. Reference gathering is the one, which its qualities, standards, norms or beliefs are utilized as a guide for individual behavior (Mowen and Minor, 2009). An individual's reference gatherings are made out of all the gatherings that can impact his beliefs and conduct either directly or indirectly. The gatherings that directly influence the individual are called membership group (Kotler et al., 2006). Reference gatherings can have three sorts of impact on individuals. Information impact happens when a man applies conduct and mentality of the individuals from the reference bunch as valuable information components. Prescriptive impact which is additionally called utilitarian impact is said to happen when a man lives up to gathering's desires by procuring direct compensate or by shirking of discipline. The psychological impacts happen when individuals apply saw standards and qualities in the gathering as a manual for their states of mind and values (Solomon, 2012). Reference bunches impact individuals through the standards, data and quality situated definite needs of shoppers (Mowen and Minor, 2009). One example of such gatherings is Celebrities that are respected by the group on account of their notoriety, prevalence, acclaim and different accomplishments, and firms utilize these people and associations to urge purchasers to purchase their merchandise (Abdolvand and Hoseinzadeh, 2014). Marketing tends to tackle new and exceptional methods for publicizing as sponsors are investigating distinctive approaches to make the commercials successful and powerful too. Superstar underwriting is one of these. The publicists know it extremely well that the positive picture that the famous people cast on the crowd can make the message in the promotion more influential (Choi and Rifon, 2007). Sponsors go for Celebrity support due to its more prominent advantages and colossal conceivable impact. There are sure potential focal points of superstar support, Celebrities embraced promotions draw more consideration when contrasted with those of non-celebrity ones, helps the organization in repositioning its item/image lastly engages the organization when it's new in the business sector or arrangements to go worldwide (Erdogan 1999). These celebrities are attractive for the gathering of people from a few points of view including accreditation, convince the crowd, making a feeling of certainty and believability. At the end of the day, by crediting their own picture, believability, notoriety, character, and for the most part brand to an item, Celebrities as endorser and underwriter expand the attention to the gathering of people, energize them, impact their purchasing choice lastly raise salary level. Subsequently, utilization of Celebrities and celebrated identities keeping in mind the end goal to make esteem for products furnishes associations and firms with different outcomes in light of the famous people's satisfaction in social and expert foundations, age and social worthiness. The issue of Celebrity support in publicizing has gotten noteworthy consideration in the writing. Numerous studies show solid backing for the utilization of celebrity supports, contending that famous people make brands conspicuous and make a constructive brand state of mind (Petty et al. 1983), upgrade the probability of procurement (Friedman and Friedman, 1979), foster brand reliability, and emphatically affect informal (Bushand Bush, 2004). Hoffner and Cantor (1991) likewise bring up that individuals copy the appearance and conduct of the media Celebrities that they respect. Publicists frequently utilize famous people to support an item to improve gathering of people mindfulness, add excitement and allure to the item, and make the notice more essential and valid (Spielman, 1981). Researchers have demonstrated that utilizing acclaimed Celebrities to support items is for the most part more compelling than utilizing non-Celebrities to produce positive reactions from shoppers (Atkin& Block, 1983; Freiden, 1984; Kamins, 1989). Celebrity underwriting has been in application from quite a while (Kaikati 1987), truth be told not very late when commercial strategies were tackling new structures since promoters acknowledged soon that by utilizing freely prestigious identities as a part of notices they will have the capacity to adjust brands identities to that of the Celebrities. Also, these believable endorsers can deliver more positive mentalities toward the commercial (Goldsmith et al., 2000; Lafferty et al., 2002) and goal to buy the item (Lafferty and Goldsmith, 1999; Ohanian, 1991; Wei and Lu, 2013). Most studies on celebrity endorsers have investigated how the validity of the source influences the achievement of the message. A very valid source is more powerful than a less sound source in impacting group of onlooker's

mentalities and behavioral expectations (Sternthal and Dholakia, 1978). Ohanian (1990) has blended the past writing on this subject and proposed three unmistakable measurements of superstar endorser believability: mastery, dependability, and engaging quality. Wei and Lu (2013), Ohanian, R. (1991), researched the relationship of appeal, dependability, and aptitude with the goal of procurement and found that exclusive the apparent mastery of a Celebrity as a critical variable can produce more aims of purchasing any brand. The creator recommends that a Celebrity representative be exceptionally powerful. As per him, a Celebrity ought to be learned, experienced and qualified to discuss the item. Specialist expresses, "regardless of whether an endorser is a specialist or not; the only thing that is in any way important is the means by which the intended interest group sees the endorser". (Arora and Sahu, 2014) showed that when an apparent master conveys the message adds the believability to the message and impacts the buy conduct of the client. Scientist likewise portrayed about dependability, which is a part of validity, can be accomplished by utilizing somebody intently related celebrity with the item. Attractiveness alludes to how physically appealing, exquisite, or amiable the source is to the crowd. Thusly, endorsers who are seen to be educated, dependable, and alluring are viewed as valid and, thusly, instigate shoppers' certain attitudinal and behavioral reactions to the brand and the item (Ohanian, 1991; Wei and Lu, 2013). Publicists attempt to contract such Celebrities for support who are appealing (Baker and Churchill Jr 1977) as well as believable too (Sternthal et al. 1978). Together these angles provide reason to feel ambiguous about an extensive effect the clients, as the vast majority of the clients lean toward those Celebrities who are valid and dependable, some like the individuals who are alluring and have enchanting physical elements, and some search for and consider both of these measurements (Ahmed et al. 2012).

Utilizing this proposition, celebrity endorsements are unquestionably activated to seek after a more powerful celebrity endorsement approach by which the customer mentality towards the brand will be positively affected. Above mentioned theories have illustrated that celebrity endorsement has a positive effect on consumer's attitude and buying behaviour.

2. The current research

The extensive majority of researchers have examined celebrity endorsement to be a decent endorser. At the international level, organizations spend a lot of money every year for supporting their products by celebrities. The primary aim of this research is to find out how much celebrity endorsement affects customer purchase intentions or behaviour through the celebrity point of view. Taking the above in mind, our research studies the effectiveness of such marketing strategy in certain Arab countries (Oman and UAE). So, we would like to know the degree of popularity of the celebrity endorsement in the mentioned countries. The niche usage of Celebrities endorsement in the Arab world will be investigated. We suppose (H1) that Oman and UAE have an important number of celebrities, they have enough resources and products, so, the use of the marketing strategy of celebrity endorsement should be easily accessible.

Being aware about the importance of celebrity endorsement, and by accepting to endorse a product, we suppose (H2) that the Arabic endorser is convinced by the importance of such marketing strategy. So, we will find out how much celebrity endorsement affects customer purchase intentions or behaviour through the celebrity point of view. We suppose (H3), by endorsing a product, that the endorser will have only financial benefits from the endorsement. We test these hypotheses by conducting interviews with 32 celebrities from the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates. (N = 32; 62.5.8% female; 37.5; male). Celebrities were chosen randomly and voluntarily participated at the interviews without perceiving any fees.

Results and discussion:-

3.1. Availability of resources and popularity of celebrity endorsement in Oman and U.A.E.

United Arab Emirates and Oman are two from the most known and rich Arab countries. According to the World Bank, in 2016, their G.D.P. was respectively 348.74 and 66.29 Billion \$. Their national economies are growing well and people spend lot of money to buy goods and services. The rapid economic growth of these countries helped lot of people to become well known specifically in their respective countries and generally in the Arab countries. According to Abdolvand and Hoseinzadeh (2014), firms utilize people that are respected by the group on account of their notoriety, prevalence, acclaim and different accomplishments and make associations to urge purchasers to purchase their merchandise. Researchers (Atkin& Block, 1983; Freiden, 1984; Kamins, 1989) have demonstrated that utilizing acclaimed Celebrities to support items is for the most part more compelling than utilizing non-Celebrities to produce positive reactions from shoppers. Based on that, we predicted that Oman and UAE cumulated the necessary conditions to use of the marketing strategy of celebrity endorsement. When asked about the use of

celebrity endorsement in their countries, 81% of people interviewed affirmed that they know this technique of marketing and that it is used locally. Unfortunately, despite the fact that the majority admitted the knowledge and use of the celebrity endorsement in their countries, only half of them have endorsed a product in the past. To find out the extent to which celebrity endorsement is used in the middle east, a question was asked to the celebrities to state whether or not celebrity is a well-used initiative in that region. To partially examine the amount of lack of such advertising method, the individuals who are aware of this issue are the people who use or may use celebrity endorsement. From the 32 celebrities interviewed, the majority (75%) of interviewees claim that celebrity endorsement isn't a well-used advertising initiative in the Middle East. They stated that the amount of knowledge of marketers in the Middle East or the Arab countries in general is low regarding celebrity endorsement. They admitted that several reasons can explain the lack of the use of celebrity endorsement in the Middle East countries. Some of the limitations are related to the celebrities that ask for a large amount of money in counter part of endorsement. The other limitations are related to customers that in majority are not willing to purchase products for a reason that just a celebrity said so. Also, according to respondent's celebrity endorsement is not so popular because there is no motivation and encouragement for celebrities, Arab countries follow Islamic rules, lack of interaction between celebrities and businesses, lack of opportunities to contact with celebrities and Arab marketers are not open minded to know the best ways of marketing. Also, interviews showed that there are some constraints to females in the Arab countries which makes it difficult for them to endorse products. In our research, the majority (63%) of people interviewed are female. Despite the fact of being celebrity, only 56% of interviewees admitted that they have endorsed a product before. The current finding therefore doesn't support the hypothesized correlation between the availability of resources and products in the country and the use of celebrity endorsement. In addition, results showed a poor use of celebrity endorsement in UAE and Oman. Moreover, celebrities from these countries admitted that such technique of marketing is not merely used in the Arab countries.

3.2. Perception of celebrity endorsement in Arab Countries

Previous researches directed by Solomon (2012) (Mowen and Minor, 2009) showed that reference gathering is the one whose states of mind, values, qualities, standards, norms or beliefs are utilized by a person as the premise for conduct or as a guide for individual behavior. Being aware about the importance of celebrity endorsement, and by accepting to endorse a product, we suppose (H2) that the endorser is convinced by the importance of such marketing strategy. So, we will find out how much celebrity endorsement affects customer purchase intentions or behaviours through the celebrity point of view. To evaluate the beliefs of the celebrities about the utility of the celebrity endorsement technique, we asked our interviewees about their perception of the efficiency and efficacy of the celebrity endorsement comparing to the normal advertising methods. By normal advertising, we mean the use of fliers, posters, street sings and etc.... Celebrities explained that both advertising methods (normal and celebrity endorsement) have their unique characteristics which can fit to different types of products and services. But, when it comes to advertising a product, 72% of the celebrities interviewed believe that normal advertising is much better than celebrity endorsement as it is commonly used and is used to advertise a whole company or many products at once. They also state that through celebrities, only specific products are endorsed, for instance a meal in a restaurant or a specific car, this would help mostly small business. This statement raises the question of the capability and believes that celebrity endorsement enhances customer purchase behaviour. By such stating, taking in mind that a certain product has been endorsed, would the endorsement enhance customers to purchase the product, just because it was said by a specific celebrity? In our research, the majority (56%) of people interviewed believe that it does not enhance the purchase behaviour of customers. According to celebrities, Arab countries lack trustworthy celebrities and the strong influence of audience to the celebrities' publicity prevents the celebrity from conducting the endorsement. Other reasons can explain why there is a lack of celebrity endorsement in the Arab countries. Indeed, companies and celebrities think that the endorsement is ineffective and waste of time. Again, the current findings therefore showed that the Arabic endorsers are not convinced by the importance of celebrity endorsement in the Arabic countries. Even, they do not believe that celebrity endorsement enhances customer purchase behaviour. The main reason of such failure of the celebrity endorsement, is mainly related to the culture and beliefs of Arabic people and the lack of trust in celebrities. Reasons for such lack are mostly related to religious believes or to the small margin of knowledge Arabs have regarding Celebrity Endorsement. So, if the celebrities are not convinced by celebrity endorsement as a marketing strategy, why do they engage and accept to endorse products? We suppose (H3), by endorsing a product, that the endorser will have only financial benefits from the endorsement.

3.3. Benefits of products endorsement

Before testing this hypothesis, we asked our celebrities about the components and attributes a celebrity should possess when he endorse a product. Most of the respondents stated that the most important attribute is popularity. They argued that the more popular a celebrity is, the larger geographic are the advertisement will spread. The minority of celebrities answered appearance as one of the most important attribute stating that the celebrity nowadays is popular mostly because of the appearance and that most of the western celebrity endorsements include a good looking male or female. The concept is correct but culture in the Arab countries differs from the western countries. When we tried to identify the main reasons that drive celebrities to endorse, we discovered that answers are correlated with the previous experience of endorsement. Responses to this question showed a large gap of thinking between the knowledge of celebrities who already endorsed a product and those who did not. Those who did not endorse a product think that celebrities endorse a product only to have a financial gain from the act. On the other hand, celebrities who have endorsed a product before, have shown reasons other than money that drives them to follow this initiative, some of these reasons include, help in improving publicity, help small business with a small push in sales through the celebrities and to motivate companies to practise such marketing initiative to enhance sales. Also, from celebrity perspective, the outcomes of endorsing can bring practically important results for celebrities to distinguish the positive effect on celebrity endorsement and in the same time distinguish the negativity of the promotion initiative. The success of the endorsement process can help the celebrity to enhance his image and becoming more famous (fig 1). But, people interviewed remain prudent on the last finding. They argued that celebrity endorsement can affect their image negatively in case of failure of the endorsement or in case of the loose of the customer trust if the product doesn't convince them or doesn't meet their desires. The current findings therefore doesn't support the fact that; even if the Arabic celebrities are not convinced by celebrity endorsement as a marketing strategy, by accepting to endorse a product, the endorser will not have only financial benefits from the endorsement. So, endorsers can help small business to improve their benefits. Also, they help to raise the knowledge of the concept of celebrity endorsement. On another hand, by endorsing products, they will indirectly influence customers and enhance their own image and gain more popularity.

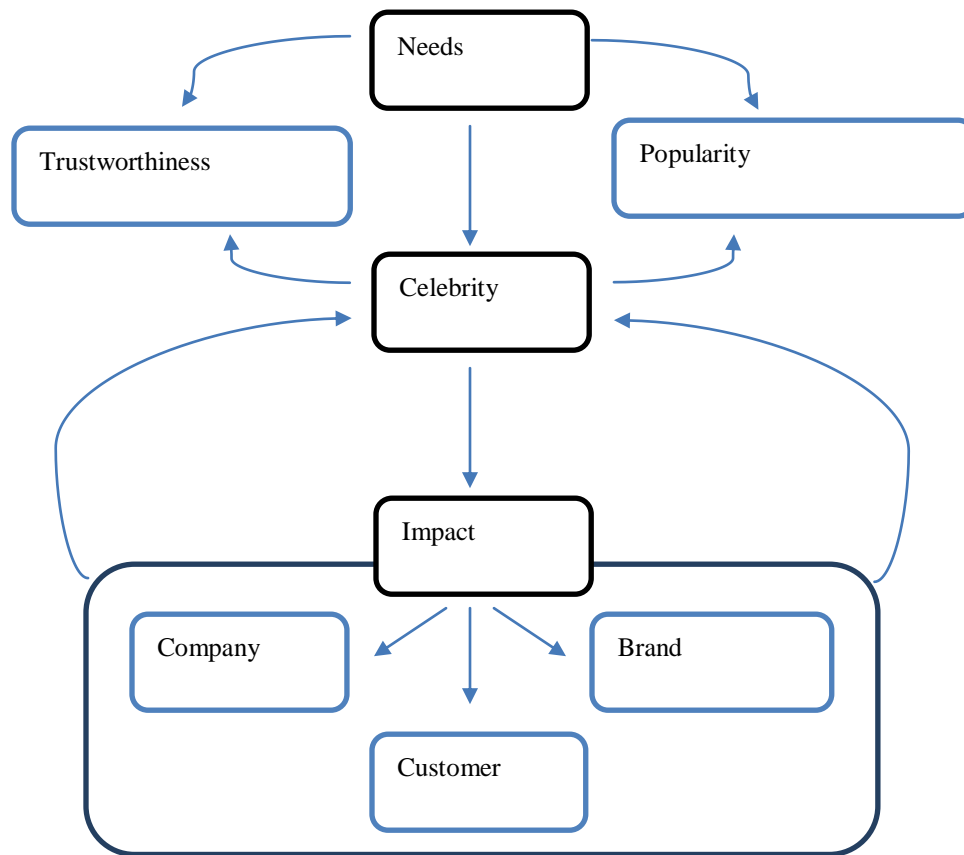


Figure 1:-Celebrity Endorsement Effectiveness Process

4. Limitations and future research

The present research has several limitations, and future studies are warranted. Due to geographical constraints we only tested the celebrity endorsement concept in Oman and United Arab Emirates. To have a more valuable result, it would be ideal for future research to investigate this effect and its implications in field studies at a large scale. Taking in consideration all GCC and Maghreb countries will give more visibility to the results.

Our research has focused exclusively on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in Arab Countries and how it affects customer purchase intentions or behaviour through the celebrity point of view. It will be fruitful for future research to study celebrity endorsement in Arab countries from the managerial perspective. The outcomes of this future study can bring practically important results for marketers and managers to consider when choosing a celebrity for an advertisement, using the celebrity characteristics and attributes for distinguishing the appropriate celebrity for a specific product or service.

Conclusion:-

As analysed through this research, a flow of effectiveness in a celebrity endorsement cycle can be observed. The two most important attributes a celebrity could possess when endorsing a product are trustworthiness and popularity. Then the celebrity affects all the company, through increasing or decreasing sales, customer, through changing customer behaviour, and brand, through increasing or decreasing demand on the brand and the ability to larger distribute the brand name to a larger geographic area. These three entities (Company, Customer, and Brand) can also affect the celebrity by influencing the celebrity's publicity (positively or negatively), the influence the celebrity makes on audience, and the celebrities reputation and image amongst locals or globally. Also, this research showed us that Celebrity endorsements have changed advertising from how it used to be. The use of celebrity endorsers in the sale and the promotions of products and services have much influence on customers and organizations. However, the majority of Arabic celebrities are not convinced by such advertising method. Celebrities still believe that normal advertising is more effective than celebrity endorsement. Which again shows a risk in implementing celebrity endorsement in Arab countries. We also notified a poor use of celebrity endorsement in UAE and Oman. Celebrities find that such technic of promoting products is not merely used in the Arab countries due to the culture and beliefs of Arabic people and the lack of trust in celebrities.

Abbreviations:-

AIDA : Attention, Interest, Desire and Action
 GCC : Gulf Cooperation Council
 GDP: Gross domestic product
 UAE: United Arab Emirates

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