SPOKES-CHARACTERS AS BRAND ENDORSERS: META-ANALYSIS OF RISK AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract : Spokes character requirement has developed its growth in popularity because spoke characters are not likely to embarrass their sponsors with unacceptable off stage conduct in a manner which contrarily influencing the negative picture of the sponsor brand. Nowadays advertiser has more prominent control over the development of spokes-characters by giving them characteristics that are both powerful and harmonious and with the alluring qualities of the endorsed product. The main purpose of this research is to look at consumer view regarding spokes-characters in the area of advertisement and, how consumer views impact the use of spokes-characters to create a perception of advertisements and brands that ultimately influences their Buying intention. The meta-analysis concluded that appeal and skill of the spokes-character has substantive influence on attitude of the consumer toward the advertisements. The second finding was that the spoke-characters play a crucial role in trust-building towards the brand. Thus, both attitude toward advertisements and attitude toward brand positively influence buying intention.

KEYWORDS: Skills, Appearance, Buying intention, brand endorsements

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I. INTRODUCTION

This study addresses the problem of brand endorsement risk and opportunities associated with using spokes-characters. Throughout the year's advertisers have utilized numerous ways to promote advertisement and to increase buyer's interest in their commercials. One of the popular techniques among all has been the concept of brand endorsement. As per the Joghee & Kabiraj, 2013 endorsers can be divided into four categories namely celebrities, employees, spokes-characters, and customers. Celebrity endorsement is most commonly used by marketers. Unfortunately, companies that hire a celebrity always have the risk of the brand image being influenced by celebrity's professional and personal life which cannot be controlled and will more often negatively influence the brand endorsed (Erdogan, 1999).

Additionally, challenges faced by companies are that consumers will focus their attention on the celebrity and might fail to notice the brand being promoted. Consequently, the consumer's interest lacks in assessing merits of the product (Um, 2008) thus watering out the image and associations that are between the celebrity and the brand being endorsed (Temperley, & Tangen, 2006). Additionally, celebrity endorsement can be very costly (Prasad, 2013) because a celebrity might hold out for a large fee at contract renewal time or withdraw, and celebrity campaigns can sometimes be expensive flops (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Therefore, companies are constantly looking for more powerful showcasing correspondence procedures to convince customers and strategies to get through the cluttered competitive environment. As a result, there has been an increase in the use of created animated spokes-characters as endorsers due to technological developments in animation (Kim, 2012) and spokes-characters have proved to increase the impact of advertising campaigns (Kyung, Kwon & Sung, 2011).

II. The Objective of the study:

1. To know the impact of spokes-characters solely to promote the brands.
2. To know the positive influence of spokes-characters towards the commercial.
3. To explore how the attitude toward advertisement and attitude toward brand individually influences the buying intention.

III. Research Question:

1. What impact does spokes-characters have on consumer's perspective towards brands and commercials?
2. How effective is the outlook of spokes-character in influencing the buying intention of the consumer?

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper meta-analyses the trends and opportunities of spokes-characters as brand ambassador to address the question of the impact of spokes-characters on consumer perspective and its effectiveness in influencing the buying intention of the consumer. The linkages between these researchers examine the following conceptual model.
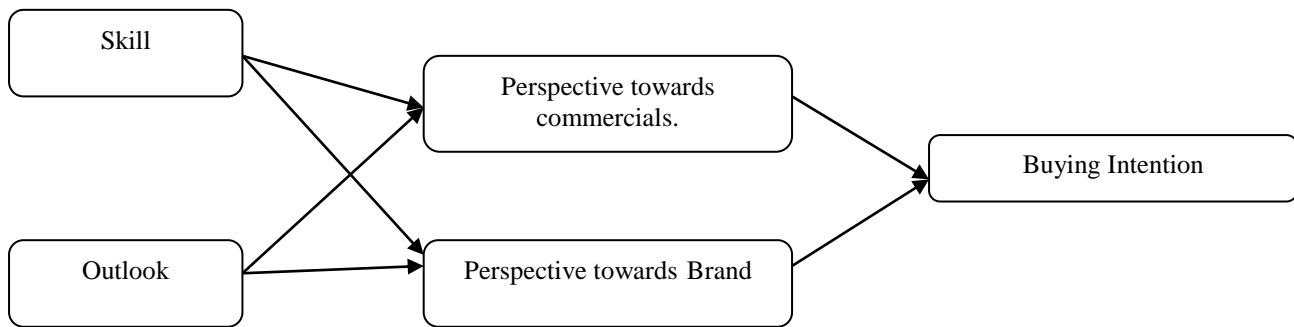
V. Meta-Analysis:

The meta-analysis of the trends and opportunities of spokes-characters as brand ambassador indicates that the spokes-characters had a positive impact in most of the case analyzed in this study. The second finding of the meta-analysis assert that in most cases reviewed as part of this study showed the effective influence of the consumers. Spokes-characters are an appealing and safe option to the big name's because the company who creates spokes-characters can have more control over their development and appeal, for example, the energizer bunny used by Energizer batteries.

They do not fall prey of the challenges inherent in human celebrities because these characters are not likely to humiliate sponsors with their personal behavior thus negatively affecting endorsed brands (Stafford, Stafford & Day, 2002). Past research has been conducted on celebrity endorsement (Opuni, Asiedu & Acheampong, 2014), yet, other studies such as that by (McEwen, 2003) indicate that there is still doubt whether endorsements are effective whether created or celebrity endorsers are employed. There is limited literature on created spokes-characters that are not celebrities used to endorse brands (Waldt, Loggerenberg & Wehmeyer, 2009),

Especially in the Indian context, the main focus is how to perceived/show spokes-character credibility (trustworthiness, attractiveness, and skillfulness) which influences consumer perception toward the advertisement and perception toward the brand and therefore towards the buying intention. According to the Boyland, Harrold, Kirkham 2011 studies conducted in the past have mainly focused on these spokescharacters as brand endorsers for products targeted to kids. This main focus of this research is the utilization of spokes-characters as brand endorsers for products targeted to consumers above eighteen and how spokes-characters can be utilized instead of celebrity to promote a brand or product.

A positive perception by the consumer for these valid measurements, the more the brand endorser is viewed as being a believable source of brand information and it is portrayed as a dependable representation of the brand. The positive attitude held by a consumer will positively influence the consumer's intention to purchase the endorsed product/brand. Moreover, positively held perceptions about the source further affect the perception toward the commercial and attitude toward the brand.

As stated by Chang (2014) spokes-characters play a critical role in creating a secondary association, which uplifts the brand image and thus brings the positive brand equity. Thus, a spokes-character image plays a very important role as a memory cue by helping the consumer choose products and aids in brand identification especially at the point of purchase situations if integrated with branding tactics such as advertising, packaging, displays, promotions and so forth (Ireland, 2013).

Spokes-characters are "a symbolic object that has been created for the promotion of a product, service, or idea with conveying a brand attribute or personality" (Kyung et al., 2011). Many of the exploratory research shows that consumers like spokes-characters and have even expressed their trust and respect for them. The four dimensions of the likeability of these characters are personality; physical characteristics, humor and consumer experience (Callcott et al., 1996).

Interestingly, it has been shown that consumers like spokes-character whose personality was unique to the character while also reflecting the brand the character endorsed (Ireland, 2013). It is a crucial task to create a likable character by the advertisers as pointed out by Pauly, (2007). Delbaere, McQuarrie &Phillips (2011) states that the advantage of spokes-character involved with the advertisement is the emotional connection that the character builds between the brand and the consumer, often for low-involvement products where little emotional connection exists naturally.

Craton & Lantos (2011) have depicted that the situational bound between spokes-character and product developed during a particular exposure to a commercial rather than at another point in time. Hence, as a time-bound develops the advertisers should make sure that an advertisement has its extreme impact on other responsible variables such as buying intentions or promptly following advertisement exposure because it is likely to be less prevailing than other attitudes like attitude towards brands and attitude toward advertisement in common (Sallam & Wahid, 2012; Banytė, Jokšaitė & Virvilaitė (2007).

According to Suh & Yi, (2006) Attitude towards commercial is a precursor of attitude towards brands, that is, as purchasers are exposed to messages they form convictions towards the brand beliefs which influences attitude toward advertisement and thus, develops a mental attitude toward brands being advertised. Furthermore, Ghorban (2012) reasons that both informational and emotional advertisements enhances brand attitude through the enhancement of positive feelings and decreasing negative ones about the brand, and by improving and enhancing promotion believability of advertisement.

In the same manner, Craton& Lantos (2011) agrees that additionally, sentiments made by the advertisement are favorable/unfavorable, the consumer's perception of the advertised brand might also become likewise. Advertisement evokes sentiments which influence thought through the indirect path and these emotions may have a positive or a negative impact on

Attitudes toward advertisement (Brown, Homer, &Inman,1998). Likewise, it has been found that there are negative and positive emotions which impact consumer in an unexpected way (Najmi et al., 2012).

It has been noticed that brand familiarity directs the impact of Attitude toward advertisement on Attitude toward the brand, subsequently, consumers familiar with the brand will rely more on their current information about the brand than on Attitude toward advertisement informing their Attitude toward brand (Campbell & Keller, 2003). Buying intentions are used to pretest advertisement and it evaluates proposed promotions for both new and existing products (Morwitz et al., 2007). Khan, Ghauri & Majeed(2012) characterized buying intention as a consumer's intention to buy a specific brand which the customer has decided for themselves after certain assessment. Tariq, Nawaz, Nawaz & Butt (2013) clarified buying intention can be identifying with four behaviors of consumers including the undoubted plan to purchase the product, thinking unequivocally to buy the product, when someone plans to buy the product in the future, and to buy the specific product outright. Spears & Singh(2004) have depicted buying intention as an individual's conscious plan to try to buy a brand. As per the disguise procedure of social impact, if an endorser is seen to be credible, consumers will acknowledge the information of an advertisement as accurate and will utilize it. Consequently, an endorsement of a product by a credible source may influence buying behavior (Sallam et al., 2012). Attitude toward advertisement and attitude toward brand are expected to affect customers' buying intention (Goldsmith et al., 2000)

Accordingly, the spokes-characters validity is indirectly anticipated to influence the consumer's desire to purchase an endorsed/ recognized brand/product via attitude toward the advertisement and toward the brand. Joghee&Kabiraj(2013)set forward that the source believability model gives the understanding that created spokes-characters can be more or less effective when utilized as endorsers. According to Pornpitakpan (2003) as indicated that the source believability display has a level of impact on communication effectiveness. A believability component takes a looks at the score given to the brand endorser and associates them with the two variables –attitude toward advertisement and attitude toward the brand. The higher the score for each element of perceived skill, and outlook. Pornpitakpan (2003) characterized skill as the degree to which a speaker is seen to be capable of making a correct assertion of the brand.

The consideration of attractiveness was prompted by research suggesting that a physically appealing communicator enjoyed progressively and positively and has a positive impact on opinion change and product evaluations(Lafferty, Goldsmith & Newell, 2002). Commercials with energized spokes-characters have additionally been found to score above average in their ability to change brand preference (Stallard, 2003). That is, if a person likes a spokes-character, the advertisement has a greater chance of attracting and maintaining a buyer's attention (Ireland, 2013). Jayswal & Panchal (2012) suggested that cartoon spokes-characters were more creative and buyers display more positive responses for attitude towards advertisements, attitude towards the brand and buying intention when compared to a human spokesperson.

The essential concern of the study was to research believability of using spokes-character as endorsers. In evaluating the influence of endorsement of spokes-characters, the study used the 03 believability measurements (engaging quality, ability and dependability). Spokes-characters are a successful influence tool that could be used by advertisers as most consumers (18-25 years) like them and like advertisements which have utilized spokes-characters. However, it is critical for specialists to note that when utilizing spokes-characters not all validity dimensions are effective in all circumstances, it relies on the objective to be achieved. The study presumed that, with a specific goal, in order to influence or change consumer attitude towards the advertisement; advertiser need to improve the spokes-character appeal and skills. Consequently, organizations using or planning to use spokes-character need to design characters that likable and look proficient.

The message content in an advertisement is also important because spokes-characters are to be perceived to have knowledge of product attributes and be making valid claims about the brand since expertise showed to be the more important factor.
Additionally, perceived spokes-character ability is important because it plays a role in the improvement of trust. Besides, as advertisers draft communication strategies and advertising agencies design brand communication tools, it is important to note that character trust positively impacts brand attitudes since customers tend to like and buy items from reliable characters. Also, to improve character reliability, companies should ensure that spokes-characters are seen, to be honest, sincere, and reliable in their communication and promotion of products.

With the establishment of the necessary validity dimensions to positively influence attitude towards the advert and brand, it has been discovered that consequently, this results to purchase intention. Given the risks and difficulties in using big-name celebrity endorsers, it can be advised that marketing experts consider utilizing spokes-character to develop strong and inspirational states of mind and behavioral intention. Through, a thorough research literature review and empirical quantitative research undertaken, the study has put forward that spokes-characters can be a viable endorsement tool. The main point of this research paper was to investigate if it is conceivable to utilize spokes-characters as endorsers instead of superstar endorsers. From statistical analysis of the information gathered, it can be reasoned that it is adequate to utilize spokes-characters as brand endorsers set up of superstar endorsers.

This research paper mainly focused on investigating the view of consumers on Spokes-character credibility (Appeal, expertise and reliability and how these three measurements independently impact influence attitude toward the advertisement and Attitude towards the brand. In addition, the study explored how the attitude toward advertising and attitude toward brand individually influenced affected buying goal. Finally, the research paper examined the causal relationship between attitudes toward an advert, mentality toward the brand and at last buyer's expectation.

This study build's up that spokes-character engaging quality and spokes-character skill positive effect on attitude toward commercial. By implication, this implies that when consumers see a spokes-character see a spokes-character to be appealing and a specialist, they will be decidedly influenced hence like an advertisement which uses the spokes-character. In support of this

finding, in their study, Brown et al. (1992) concluded the liking of an advertisement may be the best indicator of advertising effectiveness. In addition, as it was discovered that apparent spokes-character aptitude will impact attitude toward advertisement, implication this basically implies if customers see the spokes-character as to make valid claims or having adequate knowledge of the product (Garretson et al., 2004), they are more likely to be drawn to the advertisement and consider the message put across. However, this inferred that spokes-character dependability has an impact on attitude toward advertisement. Considering, this as customers watch an advertisement that utilization spokes-characters, their level of trust in the spokes-characters intention are low thus do not perceive the message to be reliable. Also, Garretson et al., (2004) suggested that perceived ability is huge in the improvement of the trust factor for the endorser, thus an important dimension of building credibility for spokes-characters as the study showed this variable to be the more influential factor on attitude toward advert. Furthermore, the research found that only spokes-character reliability decidedly impacts attitude toward the brand. This basically indicated that if see the spokes-character to be genuine and fair their attitudes towards the brand would change.

In a similar way, Amos et al., (2008) suggested that reliability is an important predictor of endorsement effectiveness and that the higher the perceived trustworthiness, the more consumers will like the brand endorsed by a spokes-character. On the other hand, the research paper built up that spokes-character engaging quality and spokes-character skill don't have the impact on attitude toward the brand. Generally, this implies, this means that consumers don't see spokes-characters that have that have supported the brands to be attractive or experts suggesting that these two believability dimensions may not influence a buyer's impression of the endorsed brand. Furthermore, the study reasoned that attitude toward the fundamentally and decidedly affected buying intention. By and large, this implies that if consumers are exposed to an advertisement using spokes-character and like the commercial, thus the liking of the commercial will result in the consumers contemplating purchasing the advertised product in future. Moreover, the research paper found that there is a significant and positive relationship between attitude toward brand and purchase intention. That is, if a brand is endorsed by spokes-character and the buyer loves the brand, they will probably consider and plan to buy the endorsed brand. Moreover, the study found attitude toward brand to be a more powerful factor in buying intention than the attitude toward advertisement.

In a substance, this implies the purchaser's impression of the brand will probably impact their buy choice than would their view of the advertisement using a spokes-character. Interestingly, it was found that attitude towards advertisement and attitude towards brand both simultaneously played a mediator role in the relationship between spokes-character believability and purchase intention.

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