

CELEBRITY EFFECT ON BRAND POSITIONING: A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO FEMALE PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS

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Abstract

India is a developing country that is flooded with different brands. With too many products flooding the market, companies find it difficult to differentiate their products based on their inherent product features. In fact, advertising is an effective marketing tool available to marketers to create and promote awareness for their products. To make the advertisement more attractive and avoid the media clutter, companies use celebrities to endorse their products. The demand for instant recall, brand awareness, and emotional bonding with customers has made celebrity endorsements the latest trend. Celebrities add new dimensions to a brand. As a result of the increase in celebrity advertisements in various media, India has become a celebrity-obsessed society.

The majority of celebrity endorsement research has focused on the effectiveness and selection of celebrity endorsers. This research paper studied the effect of celebrity endorsements on the brand positioning of select female personal care products through television advertisements. The Indian scenario was suitable to study the effect of celebrity endorsements on brands and the ultimate decision of consumers to buy particular brands.

Keywords

Celebrity Effect, Brand Positioning, Personal Care Products and Celebrity Endorsement

Introduction

Brand positioning is a major decision in marketing that seeks to build an image of a product in consumer's mind. It is a function of the brand's promise and comparison with other choices with regard to quality, innovation, perceived leadership, value, prestige, trust, safety, reliability, performance, convenience, concern for customers, social responsibility, technological superiority and so on. Kotler (2002) aptly defined "positioning as the act of designing the company's offering and image to occupy a meaningful and distinct position in the mind of the target customers" (p.308).

Product positioning denotes the specific product category or product class in which the given product is competing, and brand positioning denotes the positioning of the brand compared to competing brands in the chosen product category (Ramaswamy & Namakumari, 2002).

Ries and Trout (1997) suggested that, to succeed in the competitive market, the first step is to position the brand in the target consumers' mind in such a way, that in their perception of the brand, it is distinctive and offers more customer value than its competitors do.

Celebrity endorsement is an easy way to connect with consumers. Celebrities enjoy public recognition and they can use this recognition on behalf of a product by appearing in an advertisement for the product (McCracken, 1989). Strong celebrities can help the consumers to connect with the brand and lead them to retail outlets to purchase the brand. Celebrities can reduce the time for consumer to move from awareness to action.

Study Objective

The purpose of this study was to investigate the brand positioning strategies of select personal care brands and to know the role of celebrities in positioning the brands in the minds of the respective target audience. For the purposes of this study, the two female personal care products that were advertised the most frequently on television during the first half of 2007 were selected: Lux soap and Pantene Pro -V shampoo.

Table 1 identifies the celebrities, the products that they endorsed, the companies that manufacture the products, and the agencies that advertise the products.

Table 1

Personal Care Brands Endorsed on TV by Celebrities: January 2007 - June 2007

Brand	Celebrity	Company	Advertising Agency
Lux soap	Priyanka	Hindustan	
Pantene	Chopra, Shreya	Unilever	James Walter Thompson
Pro V shampoo	Sushmita Sen	Proctor & Gamble (P&G)	Gray Worldwide India

Source: Primary data

Lux is one of the most trusted brands in India. Indian celebrities Leela Chitnis, Aishwarya Rai, and Priyanka Chopra have endorsed Lux soap. It is probably the only brand that has had an endorsement from nearly 50 Indian film stars. The brand promise has evolved from “the beauty bar of film stars” to “brings out the star in you”(see Table 2). During the study period, Priyanka Chopra and Shreya endorsed Lux soap in two TV advertisements. Priyanka Chopra is an [Indian film actor](#) who was former [Miss World](#) in 2000. She now works in [Bollywood](#) films. Shreya is a South Indian film actor. Television commercial highlighted the freshness and beauty of Lux soap to the target audience.

Table 2

Brand Positioning of Select Personal Care Brands

Brand	Positioning meaning	Target audience (age range)
Lux soap	Bring out the star in you	Young generation females (18-35)
Pantene Pro V shampoo	For shining strong healthy hair	Multitasking women (18-30)

Source: Primary data

P&G has re-launched its Pantene Pro V shampoo with Sushmita Sen as the new brand ambassador. Pantene with Pro V shampoo provides radiance and shine, as well as strength and conditioning benefits. Sushmita Sen is a well-known [Bollywood](#) actor and former Miss India. Television commercials for Pantene Pro V shampoo appeared in general entertainment channels and youth and News channels, highlighting the positioning meaning of shiny, strong, and healthy hair.

Literature Review

Review of Brand Positioning

Sengupta (1998) pointed out that positioning strategies require that the brand answer the following questions convincingly:

1. Who am I? (the brand's identity, lineage, or family).
2. What am I? (the functional capabilities of the brand).
3. For whom am I? (the consumer segment that the brand serves best).
4. Why me ? (powerful reasons to choose this brand rather than an alternative brand).

Sridhar (2006) indicated that a strong brand position means that the brand has a unique, credible, sustainable, and valued place with the customers. Brand has the capacity to capture the imagination. The brand name is what most people remember and recall. Sharply positioned brands stand out from the competition.

Clow and Baack (2007) stated that the quality of a product, prices charged, methods of distribution, image, communication tactics, and other factors create positioning and are, in turn, affected by the brand's position. Lebu (2006) commented that a brand's positioning constitutes not only a powerful factor contributing to its identification but also an equally powerful instrument of differentiation.

Shimp (2003) pointed out that a good positioning statement should satisfy two requirements:

(a) It should reflect the brand's competitive advantage, and (b) it should motivate customers to action. The positioning statement for a brand represents how the company wants customers to think and feel about the brand. Trout (2005) suggested that branding is about the process of building a brand. Branding and positioning are like two sides of the same coin in that one without the other does not have the same effect. Advertising is one of the most frequently used and powerful communication strategies to build a brand. The central task of advertising is to place the brand in the desired position in the consumers' mind.

Review of Celebrity Endorsement

Joseph (1982) stated that physically attractive celebrities have a positive effect on the consumers' evaluations and opinions of a product. An attractive celebrity is likely to be an especially potent source of brand image because of the dual impact of their celebrity status and attractiveness. Physically attractive celebrities have a positive effect on the products and brands with which they are associated. Hsu and McDonald (2002) suggested that multi-celebrity endorsement advertising might appeal to multiple audiences. Given that advertisers can afford to employ a number of celebrities, multi-celebrity endorsement advertising may help the advertisers to build a sense of consensus, avoid audience boredom and appeal to multiple audiences.

Friedman and Friedman (1979) hypothesized and later concluded that the use of celebrity rather than noncelebrity endorsers in advertisements leads to higher believability, a more favorable evaluation by consumers of the product and advertisements, and a significantly higher intention among consumers to purchase the product. Pringles (2004) stated that celebrity endorsements act as signposts to quality and can significantly enhance brand reputations. Consumers who use products that are associated with celebrities get a little bit extra in terms of imagery, aspiration, and entertainment, factors that often just may be enough to tip the balance in favour of one brand over its competitors on the supermarket shelf or in an Internet search engine return.

Gupta (2003) pointed out that celebrities may be successful in drawing the consumers' attention piquing their interest or desire, and penetrating the target customers' perceptual mapping. Fam and Walter (2008) investigated what contributes to advertising likeability and advertising dislike ability in India by surveying individuals in Mumbai. They found that the Indian respondents had a positive attitude towards advertising in general. The study identified seven likeable attributes: 'entertaining,' 'warmth', 'strong/distinctive/sexy', 'soft sell', 'relevant to me', 'trendy/modernity/stylish', and 'status appeal'. The attitude toward the television commercials was attributed to general Indian values, family values and adherence to religious principles/tenets/beliefs.

Till and Busler (1998) reported that the majority of research on celebrity endorsers, although concerned with the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers, has provided little direction regarding the management of associations that which celebrities can bring to the endorsed brands. Many studies on celebrity endorser have considered the impact of celebrities on consumers' attitudes toward brands and/or the advertisements. Based on the research gap, this paper attempted to study the effect of celebrity endorsement on brand positioning of two female personal care brands.

Research Method

This study employed a descriptive research design. It described data and characteristics about the population or phenomenon being studied. The fundamental reason for descriptive research is to identify the cause of something.

Sample Size

This study was conducted in Chennai City. The researcher conducted a pilot study to determine the sample size. Based on the pilot study of 40 female respondents, the actual sample size of 288 female was determined with the help of a sampling formula. Purposive sampling was used to select the sample from the target population of females ages 18 to 35.

The following question was asked to determine the sample size:- Whenever there is an advertisement on TV, how frequently do you change the channel?

Very Often (4) Often (6) Occasionally (6) Rarely (16) Never (8)

The respondent's answers to *occasionally*, *rarely*, and *never* were treated as a positive outcome: their answers to *very often* and *often* were treated as a negative outcome.

The following formula used for sample size calculation (Kothari, 2003):

$$N = \frac{z^2 p q}{e^2} \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

N= Size of the sample

z = normal distribution value at 95 % confidence interval = 1.96

p = Sample proportion (positive outcome), - *p* = 30/40 = 0.75

q = negative outcome, *q* = 1-*p*

q = 1-0.75=.025

N = (1.96)² x 0.75 x 0.25 / (0.05)² = 288.12

The data were collected from the responses to the open-ended and close-ended questions on the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Table 3 shows the demographic profiles of the respondents in terms of their age, marital status and educational qualifications. Of the 288 respondents, the majority were in the age group of 22 to 25.

Table 3

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percent
Up to 21	87	30.2
22 to 25	113	39.2
26 to 29	59	20.5
30 to 33	20	6.9
34 and above	9	3.1
Total	288	100.0

Marital status	Frequency	Percent
Married	109	37.8
Unmarried	179	62.2
Total	288	100.0

Educational qualifications	Frequency	Percent
Graduate	139	48.3
Post graduate	108	37.5
Professional	36	12.5
Others	5	1.7
Total	288	100.0

Source: Primary data

Priyanka Chopra and Shreya endorsed Lux Soap in two different advertisements.

Out of 288 female respondents, 18.1 percent recalled both the celebrities correctly.

Priyanka Chopra is the most recalled celebrity by the respondents (see Table 4)

Table 4

Recall of Celebrities in Lux Soap TV Advertisement

Not able to recall both celebrities	Rightly recalled both celebrities	Rightly recalled Priyanka Chopra	Rightly recalled Shreya	Wrongly recalled both celebrities	Total
28 (9.7)*	52 (18.1)	154 (53.5)	30 (10.4)	24 (8.3)	288 (100)

Source: Primary Data

* Numbers in parentheses indicates percentages

Table 5 shows the level of satisfaction for Lux soap TV advertisements that use celebrities like Priyanka Chopra and Shreya. Of the 288 respondents, 51 % were satisfied with the attractiveness of the celebrities, but only 12.5 % were highly satisfied with the product message in the advertisement.

Table 5

Level of Satisfaction for Lux Soap TV Advertisement

Elements	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Highly dissatisfied
Celebrity attractiveness	72 (25)*	147 (51)	61 (21.2)	5 (1.7)	3 (1)
Product message	36 (12.5)	115 (39.9)	120 (41.7)	12 (4.2)	5 (1.7)
Colourfulness of the advertisement	73 (25.3)	148 (51.4)	60 (20.8)	6 (2.1)	1 (0.3)
Celebrity brand fit	52 (18.1)	107 (37.2)	111 (38.5)	14 (4.9)	4 (1.4)

Source: Primary Data

* Numbers in parentheses indicates percentages

The table 6 shows that 25 % of the respondents strongly agreed that Lux is a beauty soap; however, 26.4 % strongly disagreed with the positioning meaning, which stated, "If I was using Lux soap, I feel and think it brings out the star in me."

Table 6

Respondents' Opinion About the Positioning Meaning of LUX Soap

Elements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I associate Lux with a beauty soap	72 (25)*	117 (40.6)	64 (22.2)	31 (10.8)	4 (1.4)
Lux soap is for young generation females	43 (14.9)	93 (32.3)	73 (25.3)	68 (23.6)	11 (3.8)
If I was using Lux soap, I feel and think it brings out the star in me	17 (5.9)	42 (14.6)	57 (19.8)	96 (33.3)	76 (26.4)

Source: Primary Data

* Numbers in parentheses indicates percentages

The table 7 reveals that nearly 60 % of the female respondents correctly recalled Sushmita Sen as the celebrity in the Pantene Pro V TV advertisement.

Table 7

Recall of Celebrity in Pantene Pro V TV Advertisement

Not able to recall the celebrity	Rightly recalled Sushmita Sen	Wrongly recalled the celebrity	Total
31 (10.8)*	172 (59.7)	85 (29.5)	288 (100)

Source: Primary Data

* Numbers in parentheses indicates percentages

Table 8 indicates the level of satisfaction for Pantene Pro V shampoo TV advertisement. About 40 % of the respondents were satisfied with the elements of celebrity attractiveness, product message, colourfulness of the advertisement, and celebrity brand fit. Their satisfaction level was higher for celebrity attractiveness. The results showed that Sushmita Sen was the right choice as the celebrity in the Pantene Pro V advertisement.

Table 8

Level of Satisfaction for Pantene Pro V Shampoo TV Advertisement

Elements	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Highly dissatisfied
Celebrity attractiveness	58 (20.1)*	128 (44.4)	81 (28.1)	15 (5.2)	6 (2.1)
Product message	21 (7.3)	132 (45.8)	120 (41.7)	9 (3.1)	6 (2.1)
Colourfulness of the advertisement	50 (17.4)	122 (42.4)	97 (33.7)	18 (6.3)	1 (0.3)
Celebrity brand fit	39 (13.5)	116 (40.3)	107 (37.2)	16 (5.6)	10 (3.5)

Source: Primary Data

* Numbers in parentheses indicates percentages

Table 9 shows the reach of the positioning meaning of Pantene Pro V shampoo through a celebrity endorsement. Only 16 % of the respondents strongly agreed that Pantene Pro V shampoo can be associated with shiny, strong, and healthy hair. The majority (33.3 %) neither agreed nor disagreed with the positioning meaning of Pantene Pro V shampoo.

Table 9

Respondents Opinion About the Positioning Meaning of Pantene Pro V Shampoo

Elements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I associate Pantene Pro V shampoo with shiny, strong, and healthy hair	46 (16)*	89 (30.9)	96 (33.3)	38 (13.2)	19 (6.6)

Source: Primary Data

* Numbers in parentheses indicates percentages

Table 10 shows that of the 288 respondents, 17.4 % were using Lux soap and 26.7 % were using Pantene pro V shampoo.

Table 10

Distribution of Study Brand Users and Nonusers

Brand	No of respondents	Users	Nonusers	Percent of users
Lux soap	288	50	238	17.4
Pantene Pro V shampoo	288	77	211	26.7

Source: Primary data

Null Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the users' and the nonusers' perceptions of Pantene Pro V shampoo.

The analysis in Table 11 clearly indicates that the p value was less than .05, so the null hypothesis is rejected at a 5 % level of significance. There was a significant difference in the perceptions of Pantene Pro V shampoo between the users and the nonusers in terms of "I associate Pantene Pro V shampoo with shiny, strong, and healthy hair."

Table 11

One-way ANOVA for the Perception of Pantene Pro V between Users and Nonusers

I associate Pantene Pro V shampoo with shiny, strong, and healthy hair	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Between groups	27.520	1	27.520	24.504	.000
Within groups	321.199	286	1.123		
Total	348.719	287			

Source: Primary data

Research Findings

The findings indicated that product quality, brand name, and influence of friends and family members were identified by the female respondents as the top three factors influencing their purchase of personal care products. Out of 288 respondents, nearly 20 % revealed that they use Hamam soap; followed by 17.4 % who use the study brand, Lux' and 12.5 %, who use Dove. It was surprising that nearly 7 % of the respondents use famous brands of baby soap, including Johnson & Johnson's baby soap, Wipro's baby soap and Kids Soft for Bathing.

Majority (80.6 %) female respondents use their choice of bath soap because of its quality. Nearly 7 % identified using their brand of soap based on TV advertisements. Other notable reasons given by the respondents, fragrance, reasonable price, family soap, attractive packaging, and doctor's advice.

The findings indicated that although 25 % of the respondents strongly agreed that Lux is beauty soap, 26.4 % strongly disagreed with the positioning meaning, "If I was using Lux soap, I feel and think it brings out the star in me." The reach of positioning meaning and product message clearly was low in the Lux soap advertisements.

The majority (92.4 %) of the respondents indicated that they are regular users of shampoo. Of the 266 shampoo users, 28.9 % use Pantene Pro V shampoo. It was the most used shampoo, followed by Clinic Plus and Sunsilk. The quality of the shampoo, the desire for shiny hair, and the influence of TV advertisements were the major reasons given by the respondents for using a particular brand of shampoo. The satisfaction level of celebrity attractiveness and the recall of Sushmita Sen in the Pantene Pro V advertisements were comparatively higher than the Lux soap TV commercial.

This shows celebrity Sushmita is the right choice for Pantene Pro V advertisement. It is evident clear that only 16 percent of the female respondents strongly agree that Pantene Pro V shampoo can be associated with shining strong healthy hair.

Recommendations

It is clear that respondents liked to watch the celebrities in the advertisement. They expected that celebrities would be honest and would provide the correct information about the brand. There was a strong belief among the respondents that the celebrities did not use the endorsed products themselves. To avoid this perception, the product companies may wish to select celebrities who are using their products; otherwise, advertising and media strategies should be developed to ensure that the celebrities are using the same brands that they are endorsing.

For personal care product endorsements, companies can choose homely, pleasant newsreaders, serial actors, famous doctors, and film celebrities to endorse their brands. To increase the image of brands among the target audience, two or more celebrities might be used to endorse the same brands in the same or different TV advertisements. Consumers are very interested in watching multiple celebrities in a single advertisement. This strategy will help to ease audience boredom and increase the brands' appeal to multiple audiences.

It is suggested that the product message, product benefits, positioning meaning, and frequency of Lux soap TV advertisements should be increased to convert non-users to users. It is recommended that the Pantene Pro V TV advertisements should highlight that celebrity Sushmita Sen is a regular user of Pantene Pro V shampoo. This will give users and future buyers confidence about using Pantene Pro V shampoo.

Direction for Future Research

This study has focused on the influence among consumers of celebrity endorsements in TV advertisements for a 6 - month period. Though the research was limited to two personal care products, the recommendations are applicable to similar product categories. This study offers an extended scope for further research into other media with relevance to other product categories and the perceptual mapping of similar brands.

Conclusion

This research provided insights into the celebrity effect on the brand positioning of Lux soap and Pantene Pro V shampoo among consumers. The findings and recommendations may be useful for the brand managers and the advertising agencies associated with the respective companies to modify their advertisements and the use of celebrity endorsers. The role of advertising is to communicate a brand's position effectively. If properly used, celebrity endorsements are an effective tool to position the brand among the consumers. Successful positioning depends on communicating the brand's differential advantage effectively, so all of the advertising efforts and other forms of promotions should attempt to communicate the brand's position to consumers. The result of positioning is the successful creation of a customer-based value proposition. Powerful positioning leads to a powerful brand.

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