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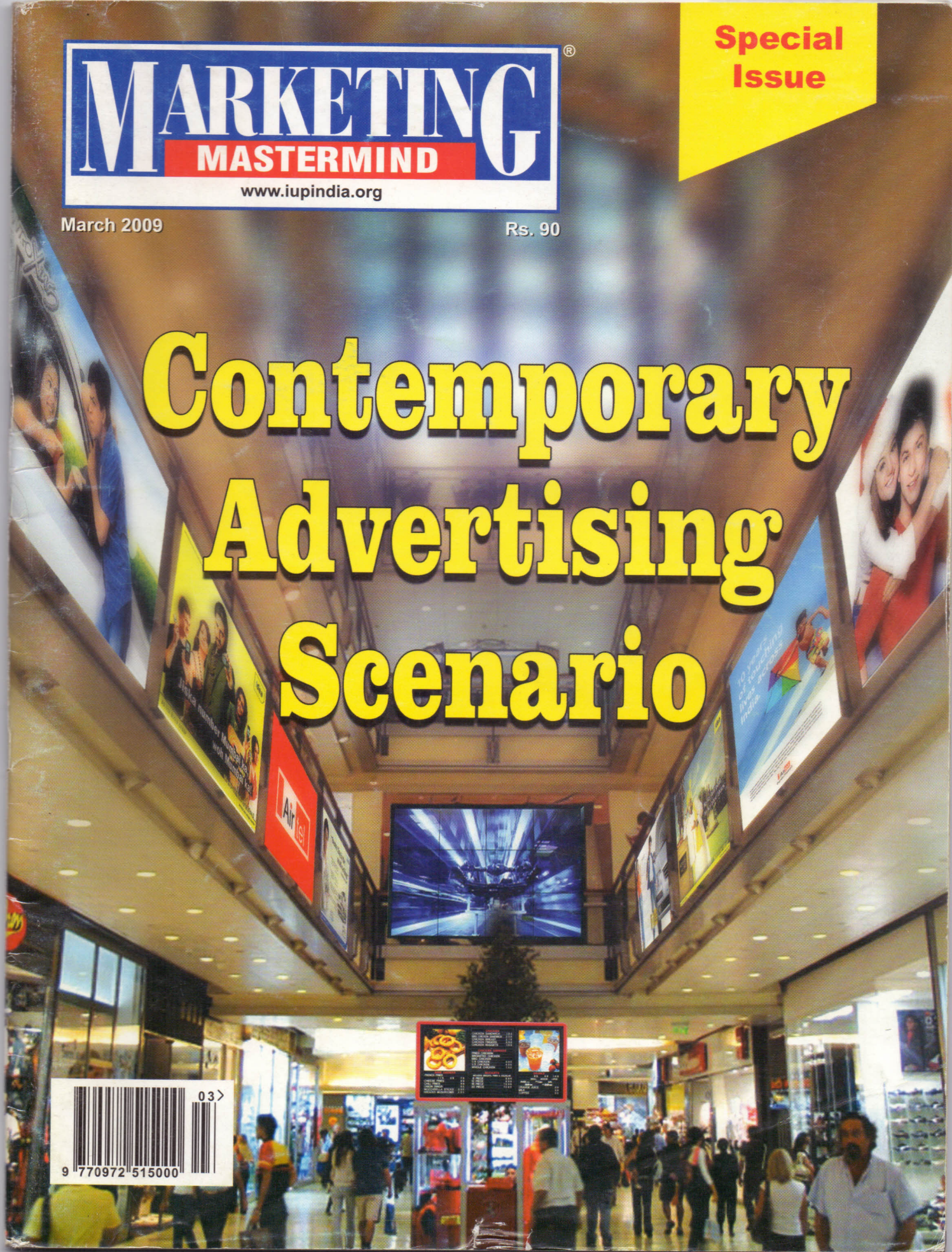
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# Contemporary Advertising Scenario





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# EDITOR'S DESK

Commercial advertising comprises various methods used by companies to communicate an idea or an image for increasing the sales of their products/services or for promoting their brands. Such advertising can be seen as either beneficial, since it provides product information and, thus, brings the market closer to perfect competition; or as an impediment to perfect competition, since it tends to make imaginary distinctions among almost similar products.

This time, we have a special issue of *Marketing Mastermind* devoted to 'Contemporary Advertising Scenario', focusing on the various facets of advertising in India. Over the years, advertising in our country has undergone dramatic change, much more so in recent times. The economic reforms accompanied by economic growth led to a plethora of new products and brands being introduced into the Indian market. This, in turn, spurred the growth of advertising. The extensive penetration of new technologies – cable and satellite television, computers and the Internet, mobile phones and bluetooth, digital printing of large hoardings and new electronic display technologies – has brought about far reaching changes in the format, content and reach of advertisements in India. The influence of the western media and the changes in consumer behavior and preferences also helped the growth of advertising in the country.

The current economic slowdown has had a negative impact on advertising too. One comes across several empty hoardings along the major thoroughfares in our big cities. Even television channels, print and other media are feeling the impact of a decline in advertising spending. But there is also a contra view; an economic downturn does not hit advertising as hard as it affects other sectors of the economy. This is because many do recognize that advertising could become even more important during times of recession. If market visibility is lost due to lack of advertising during a slowdown, it would be difficult to reverse the situation once the economy is back on track.

Admittedly, it has not been possible to cover all the relevant topics related to contemporary advertising in this issue. But an attempt has been made to present many of the major ones. The articles straddle across topics such as resurgence of tradition and culture in modern advertising, celebrity endorsements in television commercials, product placement in films, marketing through online social media, ethics in advertising, surrogate advertising and rural advertising. Other articles and the case study talk about the prevailing situation with regard to advertising in selected industry segments such as life insurance, banks, mobile phone and direct-to-home television services.

**R Harish**



## Celebrity Endorsements on Indian Television

### An Overview

Today many marketers are crazy about signing on popular celebrities to endorse their brands and are spending billions on them. This appears to be the easiest way of drawing consumers' attention, especially in the context of fierce competition in the consumer goods category, where there is a clutter of alternative brands and their advertisements, vying for consumer attention. This article takes a look at the conceptual background to the subject and delineates contemporary examples of celebrity endorsements on Indian television.

*Testimonials by celebrities... are below average in their ability to change brand preference. Viewers guess that the celebrity has been bought, and they are right. Viewers have a way of remembering the celebrity but forgetting the product.*

– David Ogilvy on Advertising, 1983

#### Conceptual Background

In the context of marketing, celebrities come under the broad category of 'reference groups.' A reference group is defined as an actual or imaginary individual or group which has significant relevance to a consumer's evaluations, aspirations or behavior. The presumed perspec-

tives or values of the reference group are used by the consumer as the basis for his/her behavior.

Celebrities constitute a non-membership reference group. This is to mean that consumers do not belong to this group themselves, but it provides a standard of reference for their behavior. A single celebrity is consid-

## Advertising through Celebrities

ered to be an individual referent. Celebrities constitute a positive or associative reference group, as consumers normally find their values and behavior attractive, and look to them as role models. Celebrities can also be considered to be identification groups as consumers identify strongly with their behavior and try to incorporate the same in their own behavior.

Celebrities have a credibility influence on consumers, i.e., consumers tend to believe the source of influence as accurate and unbiased. They also have comparative influence which means that celebrities do not set or enforce any rules of behavior on the consumers, but serve as a standard to choose for comparison.

Depending on the context, celebrities can have informational, value-expressive or utilitarian influence; or even a combination of these. Informational influence refers to knowledge and expertise; value-expressive influence is about feelings and image; while utilitarian influence is based on one's own preference and experience. A celebrity can also be considered to be an opinion leader, especially when he/she commands informational influence.

The 'expert', 'executive and employee spokesperson', 'spokes-character', 'the common man' and 'professional organization' are all forms of reference groups. However, on occasions, they can also play the role of celebrities.

### Definition of Celebrity Endorsement

According to Friedman & Friedman (1979), a celebrity is an "individual who is known to the public for his/her achievements in areas other than that of the product class endorsed." Friedman & Friedman found empirical evidence that celebrity endorsers

lead to greater believability, more favorable evaluation and more positive purchase intention in the case of products with significant psychological and/or social risk.

McCracken (1989) defined a celebrity endorser as "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement."

### Types of Celebrity Endorsements

The 'endorsement' by a celebrity can take one of various forms.

A celebrity can provide a testimonial, where it is suggested that the celebrity should be a user of the product and endorses it based on his/her experience. An example of a current television commercial is the testimonial for Veet hair remover by Katrina Kaif, where she is mentioned by name and shows how she is confident of herself because of Veet. In the Reid & Taylor advertisement, Amitabh Bachchan talks about the merits of the suiting. Sachin Tendulkar had been endorsing Boost, nutritional supplement drink, stating – "Boost is the secret of my energy." Other examples of this genre are the television commercials for Garnier hair color (Simone Singh) and Himani Navratna Tel (Amitabh Bachchan). Testimonial may be considered to be an implicit mode of endorsement, where the message is "I use this product."

Alternatively, the celebrity could state or imply "I endorse this product" (explicit mode) or "You should use this product" (imperative mode). The most common situation, however, is that the celebrity merely plays the role of a character in the advertisement, just as any other model would. But there is much more to this. The celebrity is well-recognized by the audience and is associated with certain at-

tributes and characteristics, which are meant to strengthen the communication by way of brand-celebrity fit. Further, the celebrity is often engaged in the larger role of a brand ambassador and participates in product launching and other events associated with the brand being endorsed.

There can also be many variations and combinations of the endorsement types described above. For example, in the television commercial for Aegon Religare pension plan, Irfan Khan plays the role of a character who advises others to invest in the pension plan. He is, thus, making an imperative statement, which is addressed to other characters in the advertisement, but indirectly to the audience. Another example is that of the Boro Plus ad, where Amitabh Bachchan is a priest conducting a marriage and he recommends Boro Plus to the groom having an itchy skin!

### Special Types of Endorsers

One variant of the celebrity endorser is the expert endorser. This concept is, however, contradictory to Friedman & Friedman's definition, which states that a celebrity is one who is known for achievements in fields other than that of the product class being endorsed. The alternative view, therefore, is to designate an "expert endorser" as an individual referent and not as a celebrity. Semantics apart, when Sachin Tendulkar endorses Nike's sports shoes, his influence on the audience can be much stronger, as in this context, he is not just a popular celebrity but also an expert in the field related to the endorsed product. The television commercial for Sugar Free Natura shows the renowned chef Sanjeev Kapoor in the role of a celebrity-cum-expert (Exhibit 1).

**Exhibit 1: Stills from the Sugar Free Natura Commercial – Endorsement by a Celebrity-Expert**



[www.afaqs.com/per/advertising/storyboard/index.html?id=2898](http://www.afaqs.com/per/advertising/storyboard/index.html?id=2898)

An organization too can play the role of a celebrity endorser (or that of a reference group, depending on one's view). For example, Dettol soap advertisement uses approval from IMA (Indian Medical Association), while Pepsodent toothpaste claims approval from IDA (Indian Dental Association). Currently we have a television commercial for Orbit Sugar Free chewing gum (The "khane ke baad" advertisement) which states that the

product is accepted by the Indian Dental Association.

Actual consumers are often seen providing testimonials for products in commercials. For example, Aswini Hair Oil uses this form of advertising. Though this is a testimonial advertisement, it cannot be considered to be a celebrity or reference group endorsement.

While popular actors, sports persons and musicians/dancers are the most common celebrities used in

commercials, we also have people from other walks of life, being engaged for endorsing products. Sanjeev Kapoor referred to above is one such example. We sometimes have the promoter or an executive of the firm coming in as a celebrity. For instance, Shahnaz Hussain herself makes an appearance on the television commercial for Shahnaz Hussain herbal beauty products.

**Celebrity Power versus Brand Power**

Though the use of celebrity endorsement is on a growth path, marketers are worried about their drawbacks and side effects. The first of these is that celebrities often overshadow the brand being advertised. People tend to remember the celebrity and not the advertised brand. Another problem is that the image of the celebrity may

**Exhibit 2: Recent Examples of Celebrity Endorsements on Indian Television**

Product	Celebrity and Brand
1. Processed Foods and Drinks	Mahendra Singh Dhoni – Boost; Darsheel Safary – Horlicks; Saif Ali Khan – Lays chips; Kareena Kapoor – Kurkure; Desi Beats, Hritik Roshan – Parle Hide & Seek Milano biscuits; Kajol – Alpenliebe confectionery; Ranbir Kapoor – Pepsi My Can; Akshay Kumar – Thums Up (& Chandni Chowk to China); Sushma Reddy – Limca; Katrina Kaif – Pepsico's Slice mango drink (Aamsutra advertisement).
2. Personal Care, Clothing, Health and Allied Products	Priyanka Chopra – Lux toilet soap; Deepika Padukone – Fiama Di Wills toilet soap; Kareena Kapoor – Vivel toilet soap; Trisha Krishnan – Colgate Active Salt toothpaste; Priyanka Chopra – Sunsilk Hair Fall Solution shampoo; Sushmita Sen – Pantene Pro-V Shine shampoo; Shahnaz Hussain – Shahnaz Hussain herbal beauty products; Katrina Kaif – Veet hair removing cream; Malaika Arora Khan – StreaX hair color; Rahul Dravid – Gillette Mach 3 Turbo razor; Hritik Roshan – John Player men's apparel; Akshaye Khanna – Dinesh suitings; Amitabh Bachchan – Reid & Taylor suitings; Salman Khan – Mayur suitings; Juhi Chawla – Wipro Baby Soft diaper; Sanjeev Kapoor (Chef) – Sugar Free Natura; Jagjit Singh (ghazal maestro) – Torex cough syrup; Wasim Akram – Accu Chek blood glucose monitor.
3. Durables, Automobiles and Building Materials	Abhinav Bindra – Samsung consumer electronics; Shahid Kapoor – VIP luggage; Shabana Azmi – Varilux spectacle lens (from Essilor); Katrina Kaif – Nakshatra diamond jewelry; Farhan Akhtar – Maruti Suzuki A-Star; Priyanka Chopra – Hero Honda Pleasure scooterette; Shahid Kapoor – Pioneer music systems; Amitabh Bachchan – Binani Cement; Saif Ali Khan – Asian Paints Royale Play.
4. Services and Social Causes/ Public Awareness	Irfan Khan – Aegon Religare Pension Plan; Irfan Khan – Vodafone lifelong prepaid; Sachin Tendulkar – Aviva Young Scholar plan; Hema Malini – Bank of Rajasthan; Harsha Bhogle – Tata AIG Life Insurance; Deepika Padukone – BSNL; Kareena Kapoor & Saif Ali Khan – Airtel (Hello tune); Abhishek Bachchan – Idea cellular services; Lewis Hamilton (Formula 1 champion) – Vodafone Blackberry Storm; Aamir Khan – Tata Sky DTH service; Amitabh Bachchan – Pulse polio vaccination campaign; Vijender Singh (Olympics medal winner) – Blood donation campaign; Boman Irani – Campaign against domestic violence.
5. Household and miscellaneous products	Boman Irani – Rin Advanced detergent; Paresh Rawal – Wipro Smartlite compact fluorescent lamp; Rani Mukherjee – Good Knight mosquito mats; Shahrukh Khan – Linc pen.

## Advertising through Celebrities

get diminished or tarnished, which could have a negative rub-off effect on the brand. Top celebrities such as Amitabh Bachchan, Sachin Tendulkar, Shahrukh Khan, etc., endorse several products leading to scope for confusion and possible dilution of effect.

The success of celebrity endorsements depends on two aspects – reach and brand linkage. Reach leads to visibility. The combination of visibility and brand linkage results in the response which has two dimensions. The first is behavioral change, which results in short-term sales. The second is change in attitude, which leads to brand equity building.

### Celebrity Endorsements on Indian Television

Commercials with celebrity endorsements have been appearing on Indian television since a long time. The trend has picked up quite substantially since the 1980s, when television broadcasting became more widespread in the country. The total number of celebrity endorsement commercials on Indian television till date would run into thousands. There are hundreds of them which may be considered significant and

memorable. Among the ones that stand upper most in the minds of many is Ustad Zakir Hussain's "Wah Taj!" advertisement. There is an explosion in the number of products and brands available in the Indian market, accompanied by increasing number of television channels of various categories and in numerous languages. Correspondingly, there is also a dramatic increase in the number of television commercials and, in turn, in celebrity endorsed commercials. In some instances, the advertisements of a given brand keep changing from time to time, but the celebrity endorsing it remains the same. There are other examples wherein the celebrity or brand ambassador has been changing with time.

Without much ado, at Exhibit 2, we present a selected list of around 50 television commercials with celebrity endorsements, that were running on national (i.e., Hindi and English channels originating from India) television channels as of February 2009. This list is far from comprehensive in any manner. Nonetheless, it provides a representative snapshot of the diversity of products advertised on Indian television with

celebrity endorsement, and also the wide range of celebrities who are engaged by the marketers.

### Conclusion

Celebrity endorsements are used extensively today by a variety of brands. However, the presence of a celebrity alone cannot attract today's smart consumers who can discriminate and judge the brand with or without the association with celebrities. Hence organizations must also strengthen their brands so that celebrity power may not overshadow brand power. In the long run, product performance and services offered always stand ahead of the selling power of celebrities. Companies should understand that celebrity endorsements come with risks attached. They should ensure that benefits of celebrity endorsements are not outweighed by the risks. □

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