Celebrity Endorsements and Brand Personality

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Celebrity endorsement is a highly researched field in marketing. Having its roots in psychology and the source credibility of communication (Hovland and Weiss, 1952; McCroskey and Young, 1981) it has come up a long way since the early research was done in the seventies (Friedman, et al., 1976; Kamen et al., 1975). Researchers have delved into various issues of celebrity endorsements such as source credibility of the celebrity, celebrity-brand congruence and meaning transfer model (McCracken, 1989). Research in Brand Personality is relatively new. The works of Aaker and Fournier (1995), Aaker (1997) and Durgee (1998) initiated the interest which ultimately resulted in the construction of a Brand Personality Scale by Aaker (1997). However, researchers have not looked into the issue of Celebrity Personality affecting the Brand Personality even in congruence studies. In this paper we try to address the issue of celebrity personality affecting brand personality. Based on an empirical study, we try to find out whether the same personality dimensions exist for the celebrity and the brand endorsed respectively. Following which we have tried to see whether celebrity personality has an effect of brand personality. The study is supposed to generate research interest because of its novelty of idea.

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ABSTRACT
Celebrity endorsement is a highly researched field in marketing. Having its roots in psychology and the source credibility of communication (Hovland and Weiss, 1952; McCroskey and Young, 1981) it has come up a long way since the early research was done in the seventies (Friedman, et al., 1976; Kamen et al., 1975). Researchers have delved into various issues of celebrity endorsements such as source credibility of the celebrity, celebrity-brand congruence and meaning transfer model (McCracken, 1989). Research in Brand Personality is relatively new. The works of Aaker and Fournier (1995), Aaker (1997) and Durgee (1998) initiated the interest which ultimately resulted in the construction of a Brand Personality Scale by Aaker (1997). However, researchers have not looked into the issue of Celebrity Personality affecting the Brand Personality even in congruence studies. In this paper we try to address the issue of celebrity personality affecting brand personality. Based on an empirical study, we try to find out whether the same personality dimensions exist for the celebrity and the brand endorsed respectively. Following which we have tried to see whether celebrity personality has an effect of brand personality. The study is supposed to generate research interest because of its novelty of idea.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
The practice of using celebrities in advertisements to promote products dates back to more than a hundred years and continues till date. Some studies have found out that as much as 25 % of the total advertisements aired use celebrity endorsements (Shimp 2000). The scenario is not too different in India. Celebrities from the field of sports and movies have a string of endorsements under their belt. Thus celebrity endorsements become a relevant field of research in India. One of the key streams of research in celebrity endorsements is the “source credibility” research that primarily looked into finding out the dimensions of a celebrity source which affect the consumer in the communication process. The other important stream of research is the celebrity-brand congruence studies. The congruence studies have delved into the similarities or correspondence between the product or brand and the celebrity which is popularly known as the “match-up” hypothesis (Kamins 1990; Kamins and Gupta 1994; Kirmani and Shiv 1998; Misra and Beatty 1990; Mittelstaedt and Riesz 2000). Again, each and every celebrity has a personality of his/her own. Through the endorsement a part of that is supposed to rub off onto the brand. The Meaning Transfer Model of McCracken (1989) suggests this, though not directly. The BP construct however, has been studied at a conceptual (Durgee 1998; Gardner and Levy 1955) and at an empirical level (Aaker 1997; Johar, Sengupta, and Aaker 2005; etc). Aaker (1997) had constructed and validated a scale to measure BP which was loosely based on the Big Five personality traits (Goldberg 1990). However, there has been no effort as per the knowledge of the researchers to integrate both aspects of celebrity endorsements and BP to find out the effect of celebrity personality on Brand Personality. Thus the current study aims to examine whether Celebrity personality has an effect on BP with the help of a conceptual model and empirical data analysis. Both the congruence studies in celebrity endorsements (Friedman and Friedman 1976; Kamins 1990; Mittelstaedt and Riesz 2000) and the meaning transfer (McCracken 1989; Langmeyer and Walker 1991) studies have hinted on the congruence or transfer of attributes from the celebrity to the brand endorsed. To study whether the celebrity is a source of BP has also been hinted by Durgee (1998) who opined that the researchers need to delve into the sources of BP. Thus we define the objective of the study which is to examine the effect of the celebrity personality on the brand personality. Hence, we define our hypothesis which states:

Hypothesis: The personality of a celebrity will have a positive impact on the personality of a brand.

There were four phases to the execution of this research. The first phase consisted of the celebrity selection for the study and the selection of the brand endorsed by the celebrity, questionnaire design and data collection. In the second phase the data collected on the celebrity was analyzed. In the third phase the data collected on the brand was analyzed. In the fourth and last phase, the conceptual model given in Figure 1 was tested.

FIGURE 1
The Conceptual Model

The entire study used student samples. The justification of using student sample is from the fact that they are exposed to the media, and thus to celebrity advertisements. Secondly, at their age the celebrity becomes more of an idol or role model. Thus student sample was supposed to fulfill the study objectives. Sachin Tendulkar (Sachin), the cricketer was identified as the celebrity the brand identified for the celebrity was Pepsi. The items to identify personality of the celebrity as well as the brand were selected from the fifteen facets given in Aaker’s (1997) study. The data was collected using five point semantic differential scale (1 – Not at all descriptive to 5 – Totally Descriptive). A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed for each group, of which 196 usable questionnaires were obtained for the first group (Sachin) and 198 for the second group (Pepsi). Exploratory factor analysis
(Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation) was conducted to identify the factor structure of the personality facets for Sachin and Pepsi independently. Both for Sachin and Pepsi, all fifteen facets had loadings above 0.50 and the same five factor structure of Aaker (1997) was obtained. All factors had reasonable coefficient alpha values of more than 0.7 (Nunnally 1978) ensuring internal consistency reliability. The discriminant validity of the factors was tested using Structural Equation Modeling (AMOS 5) for each set (Sachin and Pepsi) separately. We took two factors at a time with a correlated and a restricted (correlation =1) model for each pair. Thus a total of ten (10) pair-wise discriminant validity checks were run for each dataset. The constrained and unconstrained chi-square values of each model were compared and a significant difference was found between them for both datasets, thus indicating high discriminant validity. In this phase, the conceptual model given in Figure 1 was tested. For both the celebrity data and the brand data, the factor scores were calculated as mean of the items included in that factor. Then a structural model was run using the celebrity personality as the exogenous latent variable and the brand personality as the endogenous latent variable. SEM was used to achieve the objective and the software used to run the model was AMOS 5. The results indicated a reasonably good fit and a statistically significant effect ($\beta = 0.391$) of the celebrity personality on the brand personality. However, when a reverse causality model was tested, i.e. the casual arrow was directed towards the celebrity instead of the brand (opposite to that given in Figure 1) a significant effect of the brand on the celebrity was identified ($\beta = 0.88$) and that was higher than the effect of the celebrity on the brand. For the researcher, the study has generated three major inferences. First, the BP scale developed by Aaker (1997) was found out to be reliable and valid both for the celebrity and the brand. Thus it supports the BP construct and its use in marketing research. Second, the study found support for the effect on celebrity personality on brand personality, and thus the Hypothesis stated in the conceptualization section could not be rejected. However, the finding of the impact of the brand on the celebrity opens up another dimension for discussion. In case, the brand is a big one (which is very true in our case) and the celebrity is not that big, Sachin is only popular in the cricket playing nations, there could be a reverse flow of personality from the brand to the celebrity. In a broader sense, the study supports the Meaning Transfer Model of McCracken (1989) if we consider personality to be a part of the meaning which is transferred and also raises the question of the reverse meaning transfer phenomenon. For the marketer, the study could draw inference that there will be an impact of the celebrity personality on the brand personality but also the reverse may take place. Thus in case of a new brand, care should be taken before going for the celebrity endorsement, because there may be a transfer of some personality attributes from the celebrity to the brand which is unwanted by the marketer. Thus in effect the study contributes both to the celebrity endorsement and brand personality literature and calls for more research in this area.