

Chapter 16

Emotional Branding Through Celebrity Endorsements

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ABSTRACT

Emotional branding is an effective way to create a long-lasting relationship with the customers. The recent shift in brand strategy is towards gaining an emotional share of consumers and understanding the symbolic, emotional features that generate socio-psychological associations in their minds. Use of celebrities through celebrity advertising can act as effective tools to develop a strong emotive tie with a consumer, which can overtime, culminate into long-term brand equity and an emotional connect with the brand. In this chapter, we develop an understanding of various aspects of celebrity endorsement and explain how these can be used to connect emotionally with consumers. We also illustrate situations where use of celebrities has had a positive effect on emotional branding and where it has failed miserably.

INTRODUCTION

The focus of branding strategy has undergone a transition from a focus on market share to a focus on share of mind and finally to a share of emotions. The emphasis has shifted to symbolic emotional features that generate socio-psychological associations in the minds of consumers. This is now referred to as “emotional branding”, a term popularized by Marc Gobé. The word emotional branding contains two words ‘emotional’ and ‘branding’. Emotion refers to an intuitive feeling which is different from reasoning or based on knowledge, and is derived from one’s circumstances, mood, or relationships with others. The American Marketing Association defines a brand as “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or groups of sellers and to differentiate from those of the competitors”. Thus branding is the process by which firms create a differentiated identity for the brand in the mind of the consumers. Hence, emotional branding is the differentiated identity created by appealing to the emotional state of the consumers, and their aspirations and desires.

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A number of brands in India and globally are using the emotional branding strategy to establish a deep connect with their consumers. For example, Hindustan Unilever has used “*Daag Achche Hain* (Dirt is good)” promotional campaign for its Surf Excel brand, where they stir the bond between a mother and a child in the context of mother-child hassle with dirt. Similarly, Nike presents an example of a global brand, touching the emotional notes of the consumers with the use of celebrities. Success of these brands has proven that emotional branding can be a powerful tool of branding strategy, as the emotional attachment is likely to result in a deeper commitment and loyalty to the brand.

Given the success and potency of an emotional branding strategy, it is important for firms to develop an understanding of how to successfully implement emotional branding. Another trend that has been noticed is the popularity of celebrity endorsements. Celebrities possess the ability to reach millions of potential consumers and build brand equity. Globally, the celebrity endorsement market is a multi-billion dollar industry and even in India, the number of brands that use celebrity endorsers is growing day by day. Given the effectiveness of both these practices, it is important that marketing practitioners as well as researchers understand the interface and interaction of emotional branding and celebrity endorsement. More specifically, there is a need to study how celebrity endorsements can be used for emotional branding. However, an examination of the extant literature in both these domains suggests that there is hardly any work that has examined how celebrity endorsements affect emotional branding. Hence, the objective of this article is to examine celebrity endorsement and emotional branding and to conceptually develop an understanding of the effect of celebrity endorsements on emotional branding.

CONSUMERS, BRANDS, AND EMOTIONS

The examples of successful emotional branding campaigns indicate that various brands have used emotional branding in different contexts. Hence, for appropriate application of emotional branding, it is vital to understand the consumers’ emotions and their expectations from the brands. Understanding consumers’ emotions, their desires and aspirations gives an insight into their behavior and their actions. It also helps in developing an understanding of the brand from consumers’ point of view, provides the consumers’ perspective of the brand, the characteristics they associate with it and its relevance to them.

Cadbury Dairy Milk

Cadbury has been a classic example of using emotional strings in its ads from “*kya swad hai zindagi mein*” (What a taste in life!) to “*kuch meetha ho jaaye*” (Let’s have something sweet) campaigns. Both these advertising campaigns are an example of Cadbury’s attempt to engage with its customers emotionally and that of its efforts towards emotional branding. In “*kya swad hai zindagi mein*” Cadbury tried to show that ‘every person has something special in them and each moment of life has a reason to celebrate, so celebrate it with Cadbury’. The “*kuch meetha ho jaaye*” campaign captures the age old Indian tradition of sharing sweets to celebrate festivals and suggested Cadbury as a replacement of sweet. These advertisements show emotional moments of various relationships, like that of a brother and a sister, during the festival ‘Rakhi’ or of a father and a daughter, during farewell of the daughter as a bride. These are the attempts to position Cadbury as a part of the emotional tie and feelings in human relationships.

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