

*BRAND AMBASSADORS ENDORSING*

*BRANDS:*

*A CASE STUDY OF*

*TELECOM COMPANIES IN INDIA*

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## **ABSTRACT**

In the present era of globalized competition every marketer has to perform the herculean task of getting the products into the minds of the customers and therefore has to evolve novel ways by chewing over one or more ideas. Hence, the role of advertising has undergone positive ramifications by showcasing new features and attributes of the products to stand out from the crowd.

It is well known that brand is our company's product or a service which gives a unique identity and positioning into the minds of the target audience .So as to promote the sales of their product marketers endeavour to endorse it through celebrities who evoke closer consumer engagements with the brand under optimal conditions and drives purchases. These celebrities are popularly named as **Brand Ambassadors** who can be best portrayed as the representative of the organization, institution or corporation that well sketches the product or services being produced by the company or organization.

The present paper tries to look beyond the obvious benefits that might be derived out of the celebrity endorsement in case of telecom industry by exploring the perception of the people residing in Varanasi District.

**Key Words: Brands, Celebrities and Brand Ambassadors.**

## INTRODUCTION

Brand is the most valuable asset of any firm and promoting the product through a brand ambassador can enhance brand value or equity which in turn can be leveraged through brand extension. Brand personality also nourishes brands to gain market share, command premium price and insulates from discounting brands.

Endorsing brands of the products through a well known personality has become very prominent these days as they sort out the problem of over communication, provides instant recognition and transfers their goodwill to the brand. Earlier this exercise was exclusively performed within the domain of models but with the advent of celebrities in Hindi movies and Sports arena since the late nineteenth century they ventured out into their bastion. The first endorsement was made by the then cricketer named Farokh Engineer to model for Bryl cream.

A sweeping shift has been witnessed as advertisements, featuring stars like **Tabassum** (Prestige Pressure Cookers), **Kapil Dev** (Palmolive Shaving Cream) and **Sunil Gavaskar** (Dinesh Suitings) has become conspicuous.

In order to pamper the consumer a celebrity is deployed to transmit credibility and aspirational values to a brand in alignment with the product. There should be certain compatibility between the brand ambassador and the brand personality like celebrity, popularity, availability, physical attractiveness and their profession in consonance with the product. It is indispensable that creativity should underlie while using celebrity endorsement otherwise it may over power and overshadow the brand popularly known as **vampire effect**. The advertisement of “Boost” featuring **Sachin** is an epitome of celebrity endorsement. Sachin stands for style, power play composed and excellence while **Shahrukh Khan** represents vigour, enthusiasm and youth icon cutting across all the barriers of religion, demography and fostering an appealing image on masses.

**Table: 1 Endorsers And Their Latent Attributes**

<b>Endorser</b>	<b>Attributes</b>
Amitabh Bacchan	Resilent ,Professional ,Charismatic, Versatile
Shahrukh Khan	Stylish ,Youth Icon ,Energetic
Sachin	Excellence, Determination, Faith, Hardwork
Rahul Dravid	Mr.Dependable(Reliable, Composed )
Virender Sehawag	Swashbuckling
M.S.Dhoni	Sheer Power Play.
Rani Mukherjee	Youthful, Enthusiastic.

Source: Varaprasreddy. J & Ramesh. A, "Role of Advertising in Creating Brand Personality"

[http://www.indianmba.com/Faculty\\_Column/FC306/fc306.html](http://www.indianmba.com/Faculty_Column/FC306/fc306.html)

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Indian advertising has transformed as a strategic tool for boosting sales, siphoning off more revenues and with approval of the brand by star nurtures a sense of trust, a touch of glamour for that brand among the target audience. In the present paper an attempt has been made to study the perception of the people regarding the appealing effect generated by the celebrity endorsement of the telecom products in the Varanasi district by gathering data through a well structured questionnaire circulated among them in the process of survey.

## **SAMPLE SIZE**

At the outset of the study, the researchers has taken a sample of 225 samples residing in the Varanasi District, but in due course of survey, it was observed that a host of samples were unwilling to give satisfactory responses to our queries and therefore the researcher has to satisfy with 180 samples who could response to our queries satisfactorily.

## **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The present study covers the brand ambassadors of the major telecom players like **Spice, Airtel, BSNL, Hutch, TATA, Indicom and Reliance** within the study area of the Varanasi District.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The present research endeavor was mastermind with the following objectives.

- To analyze the role of brand ambassadors campaigning for different telecom companies in the Varanasi District.
- To explore the consumer perception towards the brand ambassadors promoting telecom products and services.
- To study the reliability of companies on brand ambassadors for enhancing the sale of their products.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES.**

The study is primarily based on the first hand information (primary data) gathered through a well structured questionnaire. The Primary data were supplemented with the secondary data tapped from on-line articles and journals. Two hundred twenty five respondents were selected as sample for the study on the basis of random sampling but only one hundred and eighty have entertained us for that matter. Hence, for analyzing the objectives of the study percentage analysis and two way tables were used.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The following obstacles have been faced by the researcher during the course of study:

- Out of the total sample units chosen, all of them have not answered to our queries.
- As the inferences are drawn taking into consideration the datas of a particular District only, hence it doesn't gives a bird eye-view of entire Indian scenario.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

**Table 1: Functions performed by the brand ambassadors in the Company**

<b>Functions</b>	For creating awareness about the product	For publicizing the company	For luring the customers
<b>Responses of The Respondents</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Percentage Analysis</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>23%</b>

Source: Computed from Primary Data

It is clearly evident from the above table that 27 percent of the respondents are of the view that the role of brand ambassadors in a company is to promote the product on the contrary 62 percent believe that generally they go in for publicizing the company only 23 percent of them perceived that their role is to lure the customers with various offers.

**Table 2: Functions performed by the brand ambassadors in the telecom company.**

<b>Functions</b>	To inform about the pre- post paid plans	For disseminating in-formation about novel services	For enticing customers for purchase
<b>Responses of The Respondents</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Percentage Analysis</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>35%</b>

Source: Computed from Primary Data

It can be deduced from the above table that almost 31 percent of the respondents believed that these celebrities try to make customers aware regarding the pre-paid and post paid plans ,while almost a slight higher percentage of customers are in the category of making the customers update about the latest /novel offerings of the company which is next to that of 35 percent of the respondents opinion that they strive for persuading us to go in for purchasing their products .

**Table 3: Preference regarding the celebrities turning out as effective brand ambassadors.**

<b>Preference</b>	Model (male/female)	Cine-Stars (male/female)	Sports Personnel	Common Man /Layman
<b>Responses of The Respondents</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Percentage Analysis</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>15%</b>

Source: Computed from Primary Data

It can be inferred from table 3 , that 18 percent of the respondents preferred that models are suitable for shouldering the responsibilities of being as a brand ambassador .On the contrary , a substantial proportion (38 percent ) were of the view that film stars can perform this function well, while 29 percent opined that sports personnel can create a strong appeal of their products whereas only a meager portion of the respondents (15 percent) favored that common man can also appeal the masses .

**Table 4: Views on enhancement of product performance with deployment of celebrities.**

<b>Views</b>	Yes	No
<b>Responses of The Respondents</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Percentage Analysis</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>46%</b>

Source: Computed from Primary Data

It can be clearly understood from table 4 ,that respondents opined that with the assistance of brand ambassadors the revenue of the firm receives major boost, while only 46 percent of them disagreed with this fact .Out of the total respondents 27 percent didn't expressed their opinion rather they perceived that through the deployment of brand ambassadors companies have to face a big trouble as they have to restructure their promotional strategies and sometimes also go in for redesigning their policies to make them lucrative in compliance with the name and fame of the brand ambassadors.

**Table 5: Is selecting brand ambassador has become the need of the hour.**

Views	Yes	No
Responses of The Respondents	119	61
Percentage Analysis	66%	34%

Source: Computed from Primary Data

It is clearly understood from the above table that out of the total respondents 66 percent agreed by the fact that there is an increasing shift of companies towards window dressing whereby merchandise are displayed on store's window and hence the name .Conversely , 34 percent of the respondents believed to disagree with this practice .

**Table 6: Criteria for selecting brand ambassadors for the telecom company.**

Views	Style	Sex-Appeal	Achiever	Popularity
Responses of The Respondents	36	17	68	59
Percentage Analysis	20%	10%	38%	32%

Source: Computed from Primary Data

Out of the total respondents 20 percent favored towards style aspect whereas merely 10 percent were inclined towards creating a sensuous effect in the minds of the prospects or target audience. A large chunk of respondents (38 percent) preferred achievers in their fields while only 32 percent opined towards having a renowned personality for endorsing the brands of the products manufactured by the company.

## **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

Our survey revealed that following findings:

- i. After going through the above analysis it has been interpreted that 62 percent of respondents were of the view that these brand ambassadors promote the sales of their products. For instance Reliance Communications is very close to signing up Hrithik



Roshan as its brand ambassador for promoting its newly launched GSM operations and DTH operations.

**List of telecom companies and their celebrities:**

- **Aircel** - Dhoni. It is time to move on (beyond Dhoni).
  - **BSNL** - Ditched Preity Zinta for Deepika Padukone. Not a bad move.
  - **Tata Indicom** - Kajol.
  - **Airtel** - This is a football team. Madhavan, Vidya Balan, Gautam Gambhir, Zaheer Khan, AR Rahman
  - **Vodafone** - ZooZoos. All these Telecom Companies sell their products celebrities except Vodafone, yet they still hold an edge over others.
  - **Reliance** - Hrithik Roshan.
  - **IDEA** - Abhishek Bachan.
- ii. A substantial proportion of respondents believed that the primary role of brand ambassadors is to inform customers about the new offerings of the company i.e. improve brand awareness, helps to define its personality and generates interest.
- iii. A huge proportion of respondents( 38 percent) perceived that cine actor and actress prove to an effective brand ambassadors For instance Telecom giant Bharti has Bollywood superstar **Shah Rukh Khan** as its brand ambassador ,while Spice mobile has former Miss World **Priyanka Chopra** endorsing its handsets epitome, of modern women who is adorned with beauty, intelligence and grace. Furthermore, sometime back **Ajay Devgan** and **Kajol** endorsed the products of Tata Indicom.
- iv. The survey revealed that more than half 54 percent of the respondents perceived that the celebrities bestow a distinctive identity and provide added values to the brand. For instance the recall value of **Nakshatra** advertising is only due to the sensuous Katrina as it epitomizes the expression of love and affection in the women's life. The companies like Parker pen, ICICI and Dabur have used **Amitabh Bachchan** remarkably well to revitalize the brand in India.
- v. Nearly one –fourth of the respondents perceived that it has become a crying need of the hour to make a tremendous sense for brand to procure a celebrity for its endorsement

- who goes into the DNA of the consumer and breathes through their blood .For instance sports ace **Sachin Tendulkar** endorses everything from Tyre, Pepsi, and Adidas.
- vi. As per the survey conducted the maximum proportion of respondents i.e. 38 percent opined that the trend of deploying brand ambassadors is due to the prominence of window dressing .The reputed product itself garner immense popularity to celebrities as they symbolizes excellence, innovation and world class customer service. The renowned brand ambassador will rejuvenate a stagnant brand and can mitigate a tarnished image of the product. For instance, during the launch of Santro **Shah Rukh Khan** endorsed it and disseminated information about it for those who didn't even knew the brand.

## CONCLUSION

India is soon going to emerge as the second biggest mobile market only after China with broadband being another area with the increasing use of Internet. Due to the fierce competition in the telecom sector the consumers will be receiving maximum benefit .Some leading telecom companies like Reliance Communications are already providing handsets at a very low price and same strategy is being unfolded by Vodafone for the Indian market.

Celebrity endorsement if used effectively will make the brand stand out from the crowd, galvanize brand recall by escalating **Unique Selling Proposition** and facilitate instant awareness. Hence, before choosing a celebrity as the brand ambassador the company should think that their reputation may derogate the product and the novelty of the product gets diluted if he /she is engaged in too many advertisements.

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