

A cursory look at the commercials, just to get a hang of the campaign. The first commercial ('boarding school') is about this girl recounting her first experience of boarding school. She talks about the anguish that comes from leaving a big, well-knit family, the alien atmosphere of the boarding school, the tears of distress... 'Phir maine papa ke diye hue jhole ko khola,' she says. 'Pata hai usme kya tha? Parle-G... Wahi pehchaani khushboo, wahi swaad. Aisa laga jaise main ghar par baithke Parle-G kha rahi hoon...' The spot ends with the voiceover: 'Barson se apna sa swaad. Parle-G.'

The second ad ('exam') is about a man harking back to the 'all-night study plans' that he and his friends used to chalk out while preparing for their examinations. The plans, of course, stayed as plans, with the friends rarely ever burning the midnight oil. 'Raat bhar chai pee, raat bhar Parle-G khaayaa, thodi si padhai kar li... aur exams hamesha achhe beet gaye,' he shrugs and smiles. 'Soye dimaag ko jagaaye, Parle-G,' informs the voiceover.

Ad three ('college') has this boy narrating the story of how he gave the very desirable 'Tina' a lift from college one rainy day. It turns out that fussy Tina was prone to a bit of whining, while our narrator was rather stretched for money. 'Meri jeb mein woh das ka phata hua note! Usse paise mangta? Tchh...' the ego kicks in. The solution presents itself in the form of a roadside dhaba. 'Ek cutting chai, ek Parle-G. Uska to mood ban gaya, yaar...' the boy says, thrilled. 'No fuzool, paisa vasool, Parle-G,' the voiceover chuckles.

The remaining two ads ('school' and 'train journey') are about a mother talking about her son tendering excuses for not having his lunch in school, and about a woman recalling a train journey where Parle-G helped assuage hunger when the train was left stranded in the middle of nowhere. All five commercials end with the slug, 'Parle-G. Duniya ka sabse zyada biknewala biscuit.' (For the records, as per ORG figures, Parle-G enjoys a 69-per cent share of the domestic glucose biscuit market, pegged at close to 2.7 lakh tonnes per annum. Closest competitor Britannia Tiger has a 24 per cent market share.)

“The client told us about the ACNielsen report which said that Parle-G is the world’s largest-selling biscuit," explains Prabhakar Mundkur, president, Everest Integrated Communications. "And we saw there was an opportunity to talk to the consumer and make her feel proud of the fact that she was among the millions of Parle-G consumers the world over. It was something that not many brands can boast of, and the opportunity of reassuring the consumer about her choice of the world’s most popular biscuit couldn’t be missed.”

The ACNielsen report might have presented the brand a communication opportunity, but the agency was not content with simply drumming in the largest-selling-biscuit message. It wanted to create a campaign that was befitting “a world champion”; one that would “stand out of the clutter” and “speak to a wide spectrum of users”. The agency figured that the best way to achieve all this was to create a campaign featuring ‘real people’ as brand ambassadors of Parle-G. And, for good measure, layer in Parle-G’s five ‘driving propositions’ (taste, nutrition, meal substitution, mental development/alertness, and affordability/value-for-money) by making them integral to the campaign thought.

“Parle-G’s consumer base is unique in the way it cuts across age groups, income groups and SECs,” says Shailesh John Khalkho, account group manager at the agency. “So although the core target consumers are young mothers and kids in the 6-to-12 bracket, we can have a campaign that speaks to the entire spectrum of consumers. Also, different people have different reasons for consuming Parle-G. These can be broadly clubbed under the five pillars of taste, nutrition, meal substitute, mental development and price. So we created five stories built around these five different propositions.” The ‘boarding school’ ad is rooted in taste and familiarity, ‘exam’ highlights mental alertness, ‘college’ has affordability at its heart, the ‘school’ ad is about ‘poshan’ (nutrition) and ‘train journey’ showcases the brand as a meal substitute.

The most striking feature of the campaign is undoubtedly its ‘candid camera testimonial’ treatment. Absolutely nothing new about candid camera testimonials, sure. But given the brand’s history of doing montage-and-jingle advertising (can anyone think of a Parle-G

ad sans the ‘swaad bhare, shakti bhare, barson se – Parle-G’ chorus?), this is one big departure. “This was a campaign about real consumers, so we wanted to do a ‘testimonial’ campaign with real people in it,” says Khalkho. “But we wanted to do interesting testimonials, and do them in a way that would not only look authentic, but also in a way that the target audience can identify with.”

And if the campaign has achieved that end, credit should go to filmmaker Sumantra Ghosal, insists Milind Dhaimade, executive creative director at Everest. “Testimonials can be extremely boring and dry, and it’s hard to make them interesting,” he says. “But Sumantra did a lot of homework on this campaign. He created scratches, he helped us interview 150 consumers to identify actual Parle-G experiences, he kept the scripts simple, he did some excellent casting and he layered everything beautifully. I cannot take the credit which is rightfully Sumantra’s.” Interestingly, Dhaimade reveals that the five ‘Parle-G situations’ in the campaign have been culled out of the interviews the team had with consumers. “These situations helped us make our point about the brand, and we only dramatized them a bit to suit the requirements of a TV commercial,” he explains. “The situations came from real life, that’s why they’re so relatable.”

With the help of fresh examples bring out the relevance of testimony in the above case?

Celebrity Endorsement

What do you exactly mean by this term?

Celebrity endorsement of products can fulfill either a strategic or a tactical purpose. In the case of Taj Mahal Tea, Zakir Hussain fulfills a strategic role. He is a brand ambassador. An intrinsic part of the brand itself in many ways. Distancing such celebrities from the brand at hand is a tough task. At times, the celebrity in question assumes a larger than life image that overshadows the brand and its delivery appeal.

In the case of a Coke or a Pepsi, the celebrity is pretty much a tactical initiative that is run for a period of time to plug a particular proposition. In tactical initiatives that embrace

celebrities, the name of an individual who is the flavor of the month is pretty much of an incidental issue. It is pretty easy to divorce celebrity from brand, and yet retain brand sanity.

It has become a fashionable thing to use celebrities when you want your brand to jump into a point of contemporaneity that would otherwise take a great deal of effort to build in the good old way. The celebrity is an easy route! It hits back at you at times. Look at all the money that went with Hansie Cronje and our very own Salman Khan! In the case of our very own Mr Khan, shooting a Chinkara worried many a wildlife enthusiast. A later violent image on the sets dampened it more. A much later accident in a drunken state drove in the nail further!

I am sure now we have got a hold on the subject matter. To go on with more examples, there's young Chandrachur Rocky Singh flaunting his choice of suitings and there is Raveena singing of love and a ballpoint pen. Akshay in Ruf and Tuf jeans. The other Akshaye on a speedboat surfing in his father's footsteps, on lime freshness.

Amitabh Bachchan hamming it as himself and his screen characters in a corporate film for a consumer electronics giant. This is advertising's very own star track. And the star system is working out of the film star circuit as well. Cricket has created its own ad stars... Sachin Tendulkar, Azhar, Rahul Dravid... as their rating points go up so does their advertising appeal. Internationally tennis, baseball, basketball and soccer stars command millions in endorsement money while film stars have always plugged their choice of brands, all for a neat sum of money. Andre Agassi in Nike ads, Shaquille O' Neill in the Pepsi commercials, Michael Jordan recommending his signature line from Nike, Air Jordan and players coming together to claim, "this is my planet" for Reebok.

In Indian advertising the celebrity is hot property. The film star celebrity is naturally first choice. There are clients who come in from small towns with wads of cash looking for an ad film script and with a clear agenda... to make a film with their favourite star. But the film star route is not restricted to small towners alone flip through the ads and you will

notice as many multinationals using star power, to sell their products. Why do we choose celebrities to endorse products when it costs an arm and a leg to put a celebrity under contract? Why do we deal with celebrity managers and the whole gamut of celebrity management to get the star of our choice, whose choice does the star finally represent, a star-struck client's or the consumer's? What happens to a brand if it becomes indistinguishable from the celebrity endorsing it, like the Nawab of Pataudi and Gwalior suitings? What happens when in an ironic twist a spokesperson becomes a celebrity because of brand advertising and then becomes larger than the brand like Lalitaji in the old Surf commercials? What happens when you run out of celebrity testimonials or endorsements can actually work two ways. One to bring quick memorability, recall and recognition for your brand which helps when your brand is fairly new so you can cash in on the linkage. If you are a multinational it helps you project an Indian face and often a popular Indian face. Celebrity testimonials work when your product makes logical sense in the celebrity's life... like a beauty cream for film stars, a range of tough wear for a tough guy, a memory supplement for an aging prime minister, a pair of shoes for a famous player, and by logical transference of this peek into the celebrities behind-the-scenes life, make it relevant to our own. But celebrity testimonials can never be an easy way out if you are looking at some long-term brand building. For that you need a creative idea and a celebrity is no substitute for an idea. A film with an all-starcast can still flop if the script and story don't deliver. The consumer like the public is discerning.

What makes a celebrity testimonial work at a point of time when words like brand building and realism and real people are the current buzz. Strangely the same climax that has thrown up a host of real commercials, featuring real people with real emotions, really using the brand in question and subscribing wholly to brand values. The same consumer who is exposed to Surf Excel advertising is also exposed to Govinda in the doodh-ganga ad and Madhuri in the Lux commercial. But the consumer is willing to see category differentiation. A film star in a beauty soap ad is acceptable, but a film star endorsing a dish washing powder may require an unimaginable suspension of belief.

In India today, the use of celebrity advertising for companies has become a trend and a perceived winning formula of corporate image-building and product marketing

Associating a brand with a top-notch celebrity can do more than perk up brand recall. It can create linkages with the star's appeal, thereby adding refreshing and new dimensions to the brand image.

Celebrity Management: A Concept-Selling Challenge

In a world filled with faces, how many do you remember? Admittedly the ones that evoke some kind of feeling in you, whether it's humor, acceptance, appreciation or recognition could be it. These are the faces you'd turn to look at, the ones that would stop you in your tracks. And that's when you have more than just a face. You have personality. Personality that's reflective of your brand and promises to take it that extra mile is what you are looking at. As existing media get increasingly cluttered, the need to stand out has become paramount — and celebrities have proved to be the ideal way to ensure brand prominence. Synergising personality with product and message can create an instant breakthrough. Result? Brand buzz. People begin to notice opportunities come about. People want to be a part of the brand. Touch It. Feel it. Experience it. 'Celebrities as Brands' is a concept-selling challenge, as the current notion of celebrity management is far from ideal — it's perceived as a business that merely attaches the celebrity to the brand to get that added advantage. However, the actual job is not mere brokerage — it's about selecting a spokesperson whose characteristics are congruent with the brand image.

So what exactly is the right personality?

It's one that can personalise your brand, is in sync with the product/service and is the perfect match for it. The one that puts buzz into your brand. Creates opportunities for advertising promotions and events. And forms the fertile ground for clutter-bursting ideas. Celebrity endorsement is a serious business, and if used effectively could have a lasting impression on the brand, its activities and its image. Right from Kapil Dev's 'Palmolive ka jawaab nahin' to the most recent sensational association of Hrithik Roshan

with Tamariind, celebrities have done wonders for brand recall.

The rewards of using celebrities for your brands

Associating a brand with a top-notch celebrity can do more than perk up brand recall. It can create linkages with the star's appeal, thereby adding refreshing and new dimensions to the brand image. It can also create media and promotion opportunities that sweep the consumer off her feet. Research conducted by Katherine Eckel, professor of economics at U.S. Virginia Tech, has revealed that celebrities or 'higher status agents' can get people to make a better choice but cannot influence 'people to make a foolish choice'. In India today, the use of celebrity advertising for companies has become a trend and a perceived winning formula of corporate image building and product marketing. This phenomenon is reflected in the recent market research finding that 8 out of 10 TV commercials scoring the highest recall were those with celebrity appearances. A few examples: Sachin Tendulkar-Adidas, Sourav Ganguly-Britannia, Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupati-J. Hampstead, Shah Rukh Khan-Pepsi, Sushmita Sen-Epson and Aishwarya Rai-Coke. The effectiveness of the endorser depends upon the meaning he or she brings to the endorsement process. There is a three-stage process of meaning transfer which involves the formation of the celebrity image, transfer of meaning from celebrity to brand and finally from brand to consumer. This is what leads to effective celebrity advertising.

The **selection** of a celebrity for a brand is done primarily on the basis of a marketing brief prepared either by the corporate or the advertising agency. Once the relationship between the brief, the brand and the celebrity is established, the association is accomplished. For example, when S. Kumar was to launch its new range of readymade garments, Tamariind, there was the realization that one brand of apparel couldn't be very different from the others, and what would make the difference was the packaging. So in came teen heartthrob Hrithik Roshan. The brand personality of Tamariind matches that of Hrithik — Tamariind being a new brand and Hrithik the new heartthrob. The idea behind Tamariind is the 'flavor you wear' — a brand catering to the fun-loving and adventurous

youth. And the ambassador chosen is a successful and extremely exciting personality — a youth icon of today's times. So the marriage is apt and justified.

The best advertising comes from a deep understanding of the consumer and how he/she connects with your brands. Therefore, the jhatka of Mirinda needs a personality with a sense of humour. That's Govinda and Amitabh for you. However, there's one fact that advertisers using celebrity endorsements need to keep in mind — never let the celebrity become your brand. In doing so, one runs the risk of killing the brand no sooner has the hype and hoopla around the celebrity faded.

A classic example of the above is Dinesh Suitings, where Sunil Gavaskar, the brand spokesperson, was allowed to rule the brand, thus becoming bigger than it. No sooner had the association ceased than the brand lost its identity, thereby creating confusion in people's minds.

Therefore, the use of a celebrity must be proportionate to the objective. It is also important for one to be completely clear about why a brand should use a celebrity. Is it to boost sales or to boost image? Or is it just to keep the brand alive? If the objective is increase of sales, the celebrity should be used for short-term promotions and brand activities. (A classic example is the Rani Mukherjee campaign for Bata which is believed to have helped boost sales for the ladies' footwear brand, Sundrop, by a whopping 500 per cent.) In the event of an image-building exercise, the celebrity can be used for a longer period of time, so that the brand can derive the benefit of the celebrity's image on its own.

The association of Sushmita Sen, ex-Miss Universe, helped the brand Epson achieve instant recognition in the computer printer category even in the presence of other big brands in the market place. This is the power of celebrity endorsements